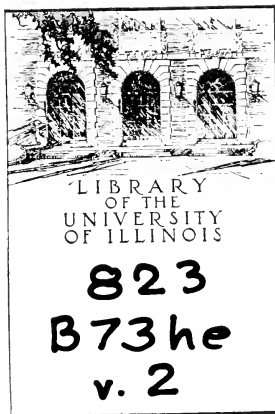


Walter Selby.





HENRY DE POMEROY;

OR,

THE EVE OF ST. JOHN.

VOL. II.

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HENRY DE POMEROY;

OR,

THE EVE OF ST. JOHN.

A LEGEND OF CORNWALL AND DEVON.

BY MRS. BRAY.

AUTHOR OF

“TRELAWNY,” “TRIALS OF THE HEART,”
“THE WHITE HOODS,” “DE FOIX,” “BORDERS OF
THE TAMAR AND TAVY,” ETC.

Can such things be
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder?

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1842.

HENRY DE POMEROY.

CHAPTER I.

The careful cold hath nipt my rugged rind,
And in my face deep furrows eld hath plight ;
My head besprent with hoary frost I find,
And by mine eye the crow his claw doth write ;
Delight is laid abed, and pleasure past ;
No sun now shines, clouds have all over past.

SPENSER.

From early youth war hath my mistress been.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THE castle of the Lady Alicia de Beaumont was situated at a distance of about three miles from Tavistock. It stood in the midst of a wild but beautiful country: river, rocks, woods, hill and valley, combined to render it delightful. The park for deer, and a thick forest, principally

of oaks and beeches, arose to the north of the edifice, whilst in an opposite direction lay several villages, with their ancient churches and monastic cells, over-topped by lofty trees. The Tavy for many miles here wound its course, forming those picturesque reaches and bends which give such a character of variety to the scene. Nor were there wanting rich meadows and pasture lands, dotted with the cottages of the poor; the sight of which, in a cultivated landscape, never fails to raise a pleasing emotion within the breast, and man feels comforted and cheered by the consciousness that he is in the proximity of his fellow men.

Opposite in character to all these objects of pastoral beauty, arose in the distance the lofty and far-extending heights of Dartmoor. The scene, though desolate, was replete with grandeur. Its granite tors, its tumultuous rivers, its wild and soaring birds, its majestic solitudes, and its imperishable records of Celtic antiquity, all combined to give it an interest of the deepest kind; whilst under every change, if partially enveloped

in its mantle of clouds, or illumined by the brightest beams of an evening sun, the effects of the moor were always imposing.

A path through the forest we have named, led from the public road to Wilsworthy Castle. The building, though somewhat rugged and sombre, was nevertheless a noble pile. Its most ancient portions were Saxon, plain and massive. There was something in their construction, marked as it was by simplicity and strength, that appealed to the imagination; and the beholder, as he looked on those primitive towers and walls, was reminded of the days of the princely Alfred, when so much of that which was great and noble mingled itself with all the plain and simple characteristics, both public and private, of the times. How different from that condition of government and of society, so soon afterwards brought in by the Norman conquest, when a race of tyrants, the most heartless and oppressive, successively ruled over this unhappy land!

The castle had been erected on an eminence

near the Tavy: it was of considerable extent, and surrounded by a fosse, or deep ditch. Before the entrance, or rather drawbridge, was that outer work, called the ante mural or barbican. It consisted of a lofty wall, battlemented, and designed to repel the first assaults of an enemy who might come against the castle. The castle itself arose beyond the fosse; its strong and high walls were creneled and battlemented, and six round towers (two of which were on either side the gateway) were seen flanking the walls. Within the latter stood that range of buildings, of more recent date, which constituted the dwelling, chapel and offices of the inhabitants. And again within this (the inner bayle, as it was designated,) arose, overtopping all, the round and rugged dongeon, or keep. It stood like a weather-beaten and rough old warrior, who, by the years and services that have passed over his head, has gained the right to watch over and command all the younger and less experienced pretenders to honour and to arms.

The castle gates were of oak, and so thickly studded with iron-headed nails, that they became as a case of armour to the doors. A smaller door, called the wicket, was seen next the larger entrance; it was constantly used, as the great gates were much too ponderous to open on every occasion, and were seldom moved excepting for the ingress and egress of mounted persons, or on occasions of state. There was an iron grating, or portcullis, which dropped down before the great gates, from a hollow in the wall above, in times of danger or assault; but on all other occasions it was kept raised, with only its long iron spikes, like the teeth of a shark, to be seen, showing what fangs were ready to tear the hardy foe, who should but attempt to pass for any hostile purpose within the jaws or entrance to the body of the building. Over the gateway were likewise seen those machicolations, or openings, through which might be poured down upon an enemy, from the battlements above, melted pitch, boiling water, fire, stones, or any other

tokens of salutation, likely to check his curiosity did he attempt to penetrate beyond the permitted bounds.

We here say nothing about the interior of the edifice, with its dismal cells or dungeons underground, where in most castles, in Norman times more especially, such scenes of cruelty were enacted by many of the fierce and tyrannical barons of the period, that the blood runs cold as the record of such deeds become known to us by our chroniclers of ancient date.

On the walls of the castle, both by day and by night, the watch paced his round; and on the least signal of alarm being given the deep-toned bell in the chapel would in a few minutes call up all the warlike spirits of the fortress, to arm in its defence.

Some thoughts of a warlike nature possessed the mind of Cædmon, the Saxon page, as he drew near the castle, bearing in his bosom a letter from my Lord Abbot to the fair châtelain, the Lady Alicia de Beaumont. Well did he

remember that the time had been when his own ancestors were the lords of the castle to which he now approached as a menial, being only saved in his own person from the condition of a slave by the will of another, with whom good fortune, more than his own merit, had rendered him a favourite.

Hitherto Cædmon had appeared to most men but as a quiet and reserved youth, bent on his studies, obedient to his superior, within whose mind no strong feeling slumbered, that awaited but the occasion to give it birth. The world, however, who thus thought of him, were but as the world always are, judges of the surface, incapable of appreciating either persons or motives which do not lay themselves open to the common gaze. The feelings of Cædmon were strong, but unobtrusive ; and though he could so far accommodate himself to the circumstances of his situation, that he hesitated not to do the office of a foot-page, and to bear my Lord Abbot's letter, yet not to save his life would Cædmon have submitted to

put on, with his commission, the crouching demeanour and the menial address of a Saxon vassal, who was the servant of a Norman, within or without the church.

Near the commencement of the path through the forest we have named, stood, somewhat apart from the village to which it belonged, a church. Its ancient stone cross arose near the entrance to the church-yard; around its base were three or four steps, that served either as seats for the peasantry to rest or to kneel upon, as they might feel disposed to sit or to pray. Some lofty elms and antique yews afforded, with their sombre boughs, a melancholy shade to the spot thus consecrated to religion—to the services of the living and the dead.

As Cædmon approached, he observed, sitting on the lowest step at the base of the cross, an aged man, whom he immediately recognised as a Saxon named Wulfred, one who had followed the late Lord de Beaumont to the wars in the Holy Land. He had lived to return,

and, as he had been a favoured vassal, he was now allowed to end his days in ease and comfort, in a small cottage, on the lands of the Lady Alicia, to whom he belonged, (agreeably to the laws of the time respecting the Saxon serfs,) as much as did the cattle or the trees upon her estate.

Old Wulfred was known the country round, and universally respected. He was, in fact, the village oracle. Men of his own standing (few such remained,) would sit with him and hear him discuss, with mutual satisfaction, how different things were now to what they used to be ; how much worse the world was grown : there were no such men now as he could recollect in his boyish days ; men who resisted to the last the yoke of the Norman conquest, and died when they could do no more.

The villagers, of both sexes and of all ages, loved to congregate around the old Saxon crusader, to hear him tell them tales of the perils he had run, the sights he had seen, and the

battles he had been engaged in by land and by sea—as all sat in silent wonder, not unallied to fear, with eyes, ears, and mouths open, as they listened in breathless attention to such accounts. Even some of the higher and prouder classes were not altogether without sympathy for Wulfred. Many a Norman knight, forgetting his prejudices against a Saxon born, would feel some kindly emotions spring up within his breast at the sight of those silver hairs, and that venerable aspect, if he chanced to meet the old man in his rounds ; as, with a shaking hand, he would doff his thrum bonnet and give the noble stranger a *Salve domine*,—for he knew as much Latin as composed a Catholic blessing. Even the most thoughtless among the young and the proud would often, almost involuntarily, rein up his horse, instead of dashing forward, as the worn-out crusader drew near. Some would throw an esterling into his cap, for the sake of the white head that it left bare, whilst he so meekly drew it off ; and the placid smile that expressed his

thanks had in it so much to call forth pity and respect, that frequently the traveller would look back, as he passed on, after giving his small alms, and would think that, though he was himself so much better off in the world than that poor serf, may be he should never live to make so fine an old man. Many a title of respect was given him, to which he laid no claim, for some called him *master*; all the maidens in the village called him Father Wulfred, and the children, Old Father Wulfred. And above all, with children was he an especial favourite; they knew his haunts and his ways; they knew when he went to mass or to confession; the particular corner of the bench on which he sat when at church, to avoid the current of air from the door,—for age and infirmity had made even this once hardy cross-bowman painfully susceptible of the cold blast. All left that seat unoccupied for him, whether or not he went to church.

The children knew, also, when they might tease him to play with them at fighting the

Saracens, and he to be King Richard ; and when they must leave off and let him alone. And they never forgot what sort of ash and hazel branches he liked best to have brought to him, when they wanted him to cut them up into lances, or to make them into bows, and string them for their games ; and long ago had he instructed them how to cry, “Remember the Holy Sepulchre !” every evening at sun down, as if he had been still in the camp of the crusaders.

As Cædmon approached, he perceived Wulfred sitting, without his thrum bonnet, at the foot of the cross, basking in the sun. Old people and children seldom find it too ardent ; like kittens, they love to enjoy themselves or to play in its beams. Two or three little ones were gathered round him ; whilst Wulfred, leaning with both hands on the head of his staff, was trying to sing to them an old camp tune, in a tremulous voice, by way of accompaniment to a Saxon glee game they had learnt from his instructions. As

he thus sat, his white hairs glittering like threads of silver in the sun, and his hale and ruddy cheek wearing a deeper flush than usual from its warmth, he looked like one whom Time had approached with a gentle hand, as if reluctant to overthrow the manhood of a soldier, who had so bravely, and for so many years, resisted all attacks of the most adverse fortune.

“A good-morrow to you, father,” said Cædmon, as he took off his bonnet in token of respect. “You remember, I see, our old Saxon times, even in teaching these children their games.”

“Alas ! we are all children now, and not men,” said Wulfred, looking up with surprise, as Cædmon so unexpectedly came upon him. “Is it you, Cædmon ? You seldom come near us now. Have you left us, too, for the Norman, like all the world beside ? But men, now-a-days, forget everything, almost their mother-tongue in this new jargon of the French. So that men do not

even give the time of the day in a way that a Christian can understand."

"But I spoke to you in Saxon, Wulfred," said Cædmon; "so that reproach cannot apply to me. And, for not coming near you of late, I have so much to do in the scriptorium for my Lord Abbot, that I seldom go beyond the walls of the monastery: and there our abbot has restored the Saxon school, on purpose to preserve our language from being forgotten in this new *Lingua Franca*."

"St. Dunstan bless him for it," said Wulfred. "He is the only Norman I have known who valued the ancient tongue that was talked by our first parents in Paradise, for they spoke Saxon."

"I know they did," answered Cædmon, who had adopted, as implicitly as Wulfred himself, the popular belief of his countrymen, respecting the language of Adam and Eve; but averring that the devil tempted her in Norman-French; a matter of tradition taught by all the Saxon monks (who loved not their Norman conquerors, and who

would have staked their lives upon its truth,) to the people.

“And how like you the Lord Abbot and the monastery, young man?” inquired Wulfred.

“Well,” answered Cædmon, “as times go. I love well my books; and so I cannot do other than love my Lord Abbot, who has made it my duty to live among them.”

“I see how all this will end,” said Wulfred: “you will at last become a monk. That fondness, for turning monk, and leaving the crossbow, to take up in its stead the crucifix, has been the ruin of our country.”

“It has,” replied Cædmon. “That grave and godly historian, Bede, a portion of whose chronicle I am now copying for our abbey, laments that the warlike spirit of the Saxons gave way to a too great love of monastic ease; he foretold to what dangers it would lead. And, in good faith, all the most able men were in cells, and few left to defend unhappy England at the time of the invasion; so that the Norman William had her

at advantage. But deem not so of me, Wulfred. Am I not Cædmon the Saxon, the son of Cædmon, the son of Oswy, the red-haired? Can I think you look on yonder castle, and forget that I am its natural lord?"

"You are,—you are," said Wulfred eagerly. "But, alas! another has the power now, and the lordship has passed from the right heir to a foreigner and an alien. And *how* passed—not as other lands have done, but by——." He paused.

"Tell me, Wulfred, I beseech you, tell me all the circumstances of that event. I know not how it is, but though, since you have returned to this place, you have often promised I should learn the story of our unhappy house, you have ever delayed, when I have pressed on you the relation of it. I know little more of my own family than that my grandsire, Oswy, the red-haired, was a Saxon ceorl, the lord of yonder proud castle, degraded by the Normans, but still a thane; till, for some bold act of his, he was

cruelly and treacherously dealt with by the powers that then ruled the land. This is all I know. Tell me then the rest: I can bear the truth of my misfortunes; for no coward's heart beats, I trust, within the bosom of Cædmon."

"You were ever a brave child," exclaimed Wulfred. "Oh, Cædmon! my dear young master!—for by birth and right, you are my natural lord, and I, your vassal—you know but little of yourself. Listen, then, to me, and I will tell you all the sad tale, ere Wulfred, the grey-headed old serf, who was born on your father's land, broke his bread at his board, and bore his arms, as his armour-bearer, to the battle, shall be dead. Yonder is the cottage that now shelters his feeble body, and not far distant is the church-yard that will afford him a little space of earth, when he needs to lay it under the green sward. The day is far spent with me; I have little else to do in this world than to die; and yet to do that well is the principal thing we all have to do here; but I should not die well did I conceal some

things from you, and take them with me to lie heavily on me, may be, in the judgment. For if to speak what is not truth be a crime, so is it a crime oftentimes to withhold the truth."

Wulfred, whose mind was not so feeble as his body, was at most times clear, and even energetic when he reverted to the past. A gleam of intelligence came over his venerable face, and seemed to enliven every feature, as he raised his furrowed brow, fixed his blue eye, in which was seen the gathering drops of feeling, affectionately on Cædmon, and said again—"You were ever a brave child. The Normans, who had swept away many of our ancient customs, had yet spared one by which the Saxons put to proof in their very infancy the courage of their offspring; by placing the male child on the thatched roof of their cottage, and leaving him there by himself for a certain space of time to mark what would follow as the sign."

"Was I so proved?" inquired Cædmon eagerly.

“Ay,” answered Wulfred, “and by me. It was I who took thee from thy mother’s arms, to prove thee on the roof of my own cottage ; where thou didst sit undismayed, never crying or falling ; but thou didst laugh and clap thy tiny hands as a couple of birds—they were robins—flew fighting—as those birds will fight, fierce as Saracen and Christian—over thy head ; and they gave not over their battle till the one beat the other down upon the thatch at thy feet. The mistress of divination, Thorbiorga, the Saxon witch, passed by at the moment, and she did foretel—”

“What !” exclaimed Cædmon.

“Great things of thee,” answered Wulfred : “that thou shouldest be fatal in the day of strife to thy enemies ; fatal to thy Norman masters as the eagle to the weaker birds of the forest in its ire.”

“But that day will never come,” said Cædmon ; “for I am poor, powerless, obscure—little better than a slave. How fell my grandsire, Oswy ; he who lost yonder castle ?”

“You shall hear anon,” said Wulfred. “Oswy

paid all due tribute in money, men, and arms, to the Norman king, to be allowed to live in his own castle as a degraded thane. I was much about his person, and I soon saw how affairs would go with him, when I observed that though he kept the day of payment, he could not keep his temper: *that* would break out, and many scornful words passed between him and the officers of the king's exchequer; whom he would call in derision officers of the Jews' exchequer, when they called on him, as a Saxon noble, for the payment of the tribute. Where malice lies smouldering like a hidden fire in the heart, it will soon break out; and so it did now."

"Was it not the sheriff of Devon who accused him of some crime, and caused him to be fined and amerced? I have heard a vague rumour of that circumstance."

"The sheriff accused Oswy," said Wulfred, "of having been in league with certain traitors at Launceston to upset the Norman rule. Oswy was innocent, but impatient; he refused to pay

a fine for an offence he had not committed ; he was at last driven to resistance by the way of arms. His castle was besieged ; he fought bravely till, from want of food for his men, he could no longer hold out. At length, Oswy, as a last effort, made a sally on the besiegers ; in his haste to do so, his standard was forgotten. It was deemed an ill omen ; but Oswy soon found a way to raise the drooping spirits of his people."

"It was enough to damp their energy," said Cædmon ; "no Saxon chief could hope to win a battle under a mischance like this."

"Oswy, however, was not to be overcome even by his own imprudence," replied Wulfred. "The spirits of his followers drooped for want of a rallying point : they had no standard ; they would neither shout their war-cry nor press forward to rout their foes, who, from yonder hill, showered down arrows, thick as hail, upon their heads. They were prepared for flight. Oswy saw this : bearing his spear above his head, and dashing it on his shield for very fury, he rushed

among his men ; with mail and helmet so glittering in the sun, that the eye could scarcely look steadfastly upon him ; he seemed at the moment to be inspired by more than the spirit of man, as he called to his people, in a voice none dare disobey, so high and so commanding were its tones ; so strong its entreaty,—‘ What ! my followers !’ he exclaimed, ‘ do you fall back ? Will you desert me and abandon my cause, because the standard is not in the field ? Is it for want of an ensign of victory that you would now fly like cowards from an unfought field ? I will give you then a standard,—one from which no man dare fly, and hope to live either in body or in soul. Here is your standard !’ And so saying, he leaped on the topmost step of this very cross where I now rest my weary limbs, dashed his shield against the topmost stone, till it rang again to the blow, and said, ‘ I swear to defend this cross, as the ensign of God’s victory, till my arms be torn from my grasp and my body trampled under foot !’ ”

“ Oh, gallant Oswy ! ” exclaimed Cædmon ;
“ such an example must have been inspiring.”

“ It was — it was,” said Wulfred ; “ a spirit of enthusiasm ran through the troubled ranks swift as the lightning along the cloud in a dark and stormy sky. All rushed towards their leader, shouting as their war-cry, ‘ The Cross ! the Cross ! the Saxon and the cross ! ’ There they made their stand, and there the noble Oswy bit the dust.”

“ I can read the sequel,” said Cædmon. “ My father, then a youth, lost with his father’s life all claim to his inheritance ; for Oswy had died bearing arms against his Norman masters, the oppressors of the realm.”

“ The castle and domain, that should have been thy father’s, gentle youth,” said Wulfred, “ were forfeited to the state ; and were afterwards bestowed on a Norman baron.”

“ I have heard, that you, Wulfred, fought to the last by the side of my grandsire, and became a prisoner to that very Lord de Beaumont who

was in the field against Oswy, and took possession of his castle almost immediately after his death."

"I stood over the body of my slain chief," said Wulfred, "till I sunk under the wounds I had received in the effort to preserve his corpse from the spoilers, who would gladly have stripped it for the sake of the linked mail. I sunk down then in doing my duty at the foot of this cross, where he fell, and therefore can I now kneel upon it with comfort in my age. I did not spare the young head then for the love I bore to my earthly master; and, may be, therefore is it that the old head is protected now by its heavenly Master."

The aged soldier passed his trembling hand over his grey locks as he spoke, as if he would illustrate his discourse by the action. Tears were in his eyes, as he added, "Oh! that was a sad day, and a sad fall!"

"And how came you to be spared, when so many were put to death for treason, after the battle?" inquired Cædmon.

“The Lord de Beaumont had charge of the wounded prisoners,” replied Wulfred; “he was a humane man, though a Norman baron, one who looked on a Saxon as something better than a dog, or a Jew. So he caused the wounded to be conveyed back to the castle; of which he now took possession in the name of the state—they gave it him afterwards as his own—and there I lay, grievously sick of my wounds, for more than two months, hanging between life and death.”

“But you lived, Wulfred,” said Cædmon, “to serve, for many a year, your new master the Norman baron, as faithfully as you had formerly done your Saxon chief. How did this come to pass?”

“You shall hear,” replied the narrator, who liked not to be hurried in his tale. “When I lay on a sick bed, and like to die, I was a very different man to what I had ever been before. I had been young, bold, and confident, and had never known till then what it was to be taken

down in the midst of my stoutness. How often had I said, that I cared not for the hurts of war, that my spirit should never rue for any mischance that might befall me in battle. But now my proud heart was humbled and brought down with my body's weakness, till I shed tears as fast as drops of rain, and grieved like a girl for the sadness of my fortunes."

"They were changed, indeed, by the death of the noble Oswy," said Cædmon; "I marvel not your spirit was brought low."

"Oh! it was broken, quite broken," replied Wulfred. "I had dreadful thoughts and fancies too, when I lay on that sick bed. I know not if they were real sights of horror, or only the recollection of them. But the vision of this very cross, with the body of my chief lying dead at its base, haunted me by day and by night. In the day, it seemed to rise up before me in every corner of the place where I lay. If I fixed a look anywhere there I saw the cross—this cross covered with blood; and if I slept, I had

horrible dreams as I lay panting in terror on my straw. I saw the face of Oswy convulsed in its dying pangs before my eyes, as the groans and the tumult of the battle, and the cry of ‘The Cross!’ that he shouted to his people as they rallied round him, startled me in my sleep; and I awoke with limbs trembling, and heart beating, and the very hair on my head wet with the agony of my dream. And then would I crouch down in my straw, and think upon my sins.”

“And yet you, Wulfred, who thus quailed before the power of some evil spirit—for such it must have been—were known for one of the bravest men that ever followed to the field.”

“Oh! there is no being brave with God, when he visits,” said Wulfred; “for God it was, and no evil spirit, I am assured by what followed, who thus shook me when I thought upon my sins. Amongst the greatest, was disobedience—disobedience to a poor, lone, widowed mother. She was a cotter of my Lord Oswy, and I was his serf. It was my duty to labour on my lord’s

land, and to work in the spot of ground that was beside her dwelling. I was all the world to her, and yet, without being forced to do so by my chief, I left her, and my peaceable way of life, to join the folk at the castle, as bearing a cross-bow seemed to me more manly than to handle a spade. I thought not of my mother's grey hairs, nor of her loneliness, when I left her bereft of all comfort, to follow your grandsire."

"But she was well cared for," said Cædmon. "I have heard that the generous Oswy never left his poor cotters to want bread. She must, then, have been cared for."

"Ay, that she was," said Wulfred; "and the last care was soon shown for her; for she never held up her head after I deserted her. She remained in the same poor cottage, mourning and pining, like a bird that droops rather than lives in the same nest, when its young ones have been carried away from it. She had, however, soon no more need of me, nor of anything else, for she broke her heart with sorrow; sighed her-

self out of life, and sunk down to her last sleep as quiet as a child to its rest ; leaving to me to feel, in due season, as I deserved to feel, all the pangs of her dying. I am, even now, as I was when I lay sick on my straw, and thought upon these things.”

Wulfred wiped his sleeve across his eyes, whose tears showed how young the old could be in feeling, when looking back on past times. At length, he recovered in some degree his resolution, and thus continued his tale :—

“How I thought of my poor mother, and how I was punished for my disobedience to her, you may well suppose, gentle Cædmon, from what I have said of the sufferings of my prison. Hour after hour I lay on my straw and thought of her till I could fancy I could see her ; see her with the tears in her eyes, and hear her as with words and tones that made my heart sick to recal them, she begged me to stay with her, and not to go as a cross-bowman to the castle, since my lord would not compel me to do so. And

then, I thought, how hard-hearted I had been, and hated myself for it. And I could see her of an evening, in my fancy, as she used to sit at her cottage door, plying her needles of bone to make me, her thankless son, a bonnet or hose. And I seemed, as I thus looked at her in my mind, to sit once more by her side and to listen to her affectionate words, as she would call me the joy of her heart—a joy that broke her heart at the last ; and I could see her, I thought, and the very woodbine and roses that grew round the door of her dwelling ; and then would I weep to think that now no flower bloomed for her but what was on her grave.”

Again did the old man pause ; and Cædmon, who felt that deep interest that in a great measure awes whilst it subdues,—which the griefs of the old are so sure to convey to a gentle and a generous mind,—endeavoured to draw off his attention from a subject so full of unavailing regret ; and asked him, therefore, somewhat abruptly, how he came to take the Cross.

“Oh, very naturally,” replied Wulfred. “This cross, on whose base I now rest,—where fell my noble master,—where I was wounded and taken prisoner,—this cross, which served as the standard of our unhappy fray,—haunted me, as I told you, day and night, in prison. I saw it everywhere, and in my dream it always rose up before me covered with blood. It was therefore the red cross, indeed, to me. So I vowed a vow in my sickness, that might I but live, and could once more bear arms, I would, to expiate my sins, and obey the evident commands of Heaven, petition my Lord de Beaumont to let me follow in the expedition he meditated to the Holy Land. He gave his consent ; but some circumstances delayed his going to Palestine, so he sent me thither in the train of another baron before he went himself.”

“You were not with him then, when he was slain ?” said Cædmon.

“I was not,” replied Wulfred. “There were many sad circumstances attending his death ; and though he was a Norman, and had posses-

sion of the castle that was once the noble Oswy's, and should now have been yours, I could not but sorrow for my Lord de Beaumont, for he was as gallant a leader as ever led a follower to the holy wars. And so humane was he as a master to our unhappy race, that he had obtained the name of the 'poor Saxon's friend.'"

"I would he were still alive, and lord of yonder castle," said Cædmon; "for may be, so brave a man would not have forgotten that in the veins of Cædmon ran gentle blood; probably he would not have denied me, all degraded though I am, the occasion, by meeting him, sword to sword, in contest, of doing justice to the memory of my unhappy grandsire. But this is vain talking; he is dead, and women now bear the rule in my father's halls. I have a letter from my Lord Abbot to one of them. Wilt thou marshal me the way, for I am yet a stranger to Wilsworthy Castle?"

The old man rose to do so, and, sighing deeply,

as he thought in what manner the young and true heir was, for the first time, about to visit the home of his forefathers, he led the way, with a melancholy spirit, and scarcely spoke till he stood without the castle gates.

CHAPTER II.

In peasant life he might have known
As fair a face, as sweet a tone ;
But village notes could ne'er supply
That rich and varied melody,
And ne'er in cottage maid was seen
The easy dignity of mien,
Claiming respect, yet waving state,
That marks the daughters of the great.

SCOTT'S *Rokeby*.

CÆDMON soon found himself within the walls of his forfeited inheritance. He was ushered into a noble gothic apartment, the hall of audience, where all was so different to the usages of modern times, that we must lay before our readers a slight sketch of the scene.

The hall was lofty ; it was principally dis-

tinguished by its air of gloomy grandeur, its dark vaulted ceiling of carved oak, and its tall shafted and painted window, which, through the richly stained glass, threw its subdued light on a floor inlaid with glazed tiles,—for even at this early period the latter had been imported into England, by the Flemings. The hangings were of the richest tapestry, embroidered by the Saxon dames of the race of Oswy, long before the Conquest, when no nation in Europe could compete with the ladies of our island in the beauty and richness of their work.

Several suits of armour, some of which had formerly belonged to another race of men, hung on the walls, with weapons of war and of the chase, and numerous banners, the trophies of many a well-fought field. Beneath the great window stood erect a suit of armour, surmounted by a helmet, with the visor closed; bearing on the left arm the shield, and in the right mailed hand, the lance. This pageant, as the subdued light from the painted glass streamed upon it,

appeared with such an imposing effect, to any one entering the hall from the opposite side, that it looked like an armed knight, who, with closed visor, kept watch and ward in the apartment. The entire suit had belonged to the late Lord de Beaumont, and, when thus seen, it had altogether so much of his air, as well as height, that in the dusk of the evening it caused the timid and the superstitious to feel a shudder pass through their veins as they looked upon it; it stirred the imagination as a thing ready to start into life, or as the ghost appeared to Hamlet, like a "spectre in arms." The stools, tressels, and tables that constituted the furniture for domestic use, were of the richest carved oak, adorned with embroidery; and at the end of the hall were, as usual, perches for the hawks; birds used for falconry, and very often carried by their masters on the wrist, within doors, and always when they rode forth to the field in pursuit of their sports.

The chamberlain and house steward, the for-

mer carrying his white wand, like a master of the ceremonies, and the latter having the badge of the family embroidered on the breast of his tunic, conducted Cædmon with every mark of respect into this hall, as soon as they learnt that he came on a message from my Lord Abbot to their lady.

Cædmon, in whose manner and address there was all that grace which the refined feelings of the poet and the gentleman seldom fail to convey, paused as he entered, and made his obeisance to the noble ladies in whose presence he now stood. He was struck with admiration, and scarcely knew which he most admired, the majestic Lady Alicia, in the full maturity of womanhood, or the lovely Lady Adela, in the bloom of youthful charms. With the former, the character of her beauty was commanding ; she was neither young nor old, but very fair : —

“ For Time had laid his hand so gently on her,
As he too had been aw’d.”

She was attired in a gown or tunic of green ;

a rich girdle of jewels bound her waist, and her embroidered robe fell from her shoulders in long and ample folds. Her *aumônière* (a small pouch in which she kept money for the poor, and the altars of saints) depended from her left side; on the right was a rosary; a collar of jewels encircled her throat; she had bracelets of the same; and a caul of gold network covered her head, and secured her veil. Nothing could be more rich than this attire, or more eminently handsome than the widowed châtelain by whom it was worn.

The Lady Adela was attired in a very similar costume, but more simple, having on her head only a chaplet of roses, and wearing her hair according to the fashion of the period with girls of her age, (a fashion revived for children in our own time,) in two long plaits falling over her shoulders.

The ladies were seated at a table, where lay their materials for needlework, hawks' bells, tassels, and lures, Adela's lute, and the fool's

gilt bauble ;—the last named emblem having, just before Cædmon entered, been taken from the fool by the Lady Alicia, because Patch had amused himself, and teased her ancient nurse, by using it in no very courteous way, to the discomposure of the long ends of her favourite's cendal tippet. Nurse Cicely, for such was her name, and Patch completed the group assembled in the hall ; these menials being both privileged persons ; the latter on account of his office, to supply food for mirth and conversation, to lighten the dull hours ; and the female gossip on a much higher ground of consideration, that of having nursed in infancy the Lady Alicia herself ; from whom she had been separated for many years, whilst her mistress was in Normandy, but to whom she had gladly returned, on her arrival once more in England, in the hope to end her days at Wilsworthy Castle.

Nurse Cicely was a great curiosity ; she was tall and straight as a maple, but a little more bulky. Her face was a full and important face,

with a double chin; which, as she carried her head high, and drew it backward whenever she spoke to an inferior, seemed to stand out so prominently, as if it claimed for itself alone the respect that might be due to the whole portly person. Her cheeks, also, looked always warm, and in order; perhaps, to afford them a cool air, she was very much in the habit of raising puffs of it, greatly to the increase of her own importance, by the constant exercise of a large round fan, much in vogue in her day, that was made from the blue, green, and burnished feathers of the peacock. Nurse Cicely and her fan were never seen apart: if she were angry, its quick and hasty flutter expressed her mood to all the house; whereas, if she were pleased, everybody knew that also, by the soft and complacent manner in which the fan waved backwards and forwards, with a motion that was too gentle to disturb even a fly upon its feathers. And if she were in a proud or offended humour, she would sit in sullen importance, agitating the

air around her when she could disturb nothing else. Within or without doors, she never talked without the accompanying flourish of the fan; and when she went to church she could no more have got through her devotions without it than she could through her Pater noster wanting her rosary. In fine, like most old nurses in her day, (and the custom continued to the times of Elizabeth, and is noticed by Shakspeare in the Nurse of the Capulet,) she carried the fan, and was as expert in its use as the ladies might have been in the days of Mr. Addison, who recommended its exercise as an art worthy cultivation.

Nurse Cicely, at the moment the Saxon page entered the hall, was standing behind her mistress, putting something right that was amiss about her head-gear. But the Lady Alicia de Beaumont, without heeding her attendant, rose as he advanced, so much pleased was she with his appearance; and on the recommendation of his open countenance and gentle bearing, (with-

out knowing what were his pretensions in virtue of his blood to her castle,) she bade him welcome to it with the utmost courtesy, took from him, with a smile, the abbot's letter, which Cædmon presented to her on his knees, and pressing it to her lips, as all the laity never failed to do an epistle that came from such a quarter, broke the seal, loosed the silken string, and forthwith read the contents ;—for Lady Alicia could read, rare as that accomplishment was, not only with ladies, but even with nobles and knights of her day. She, however, in early youth had been designed for the cloister, in the hope, one day, to see her an abbess ; and, as learning was absolutely necessary in the heads of all conventual houses, she had received a learned education, was a good Latin scholar, and was not unacquainted with the then prevalent sciences of Europe. Like Edgitha, the amiable consort of Edward the Confessor, she delighted to converse with scholars, and with

one who, like Cædmon, was young enough to be her son, she would argue encouragingly, but closely.

After having expressed her willingness to grant the Lord Abbot the permission he required to hunt, with his friend, over her domain on the morrow, she proceeded to question Cædmon about the logicians at the abbey ;—and it seemed she was as little inclined to favour their pretensions as Baldwin himself, for she thus concluded her somewhat severe animadversions on these professors :—“ For my own part, I would say to such teachers, as Alexander did to Aristotle, ‘ Away with these abstruse questions, and teach me simple things ;’ yet, alas ! such logicians are now held in our schools as the Minervas were among the ancients, as the very deities of wisdom.”

“ Pshaw !” said Patch ; “ they are but as Minerva’s bird, her owl. And canst thou, Master Cædmon, with all thy scholarship, canst thou

tell me, wherefore the moping and melancholy bird of night was made by the heathen to stand as an emblem of wisdom ?”

“ May be,” said Cædmon, “ because the owl hath a more solemn aspect than any other bird of the air ; and that which looks solemn ever imposes on the credulity of mankind.”

“ No, that is not it,” said Patch. “ Know you not that the owl hath a vision which can penetrate through what seems to be darkness to all other creatures ? She sees, therefore, whatever comes across her path for prey, frogs, mice, anything. Now, these far-famed logicians are as the very owls of wisdom in our schools ; for whilst their poor scholars grope about in the night of ignorance, they see how best to pounce upon them for their own especial profit.”

“ The fool sends a shaft at a venture,” said the Lady Alicia, “ but it sometimes goes true to the mark. You seem to look around you, as if you admired our old hall, gentle Cædmon,” she continued, more particularly addressing her-

self to the Saxon page, as she observed that his eyes were ranging around, apparently with a feeling of much interest: "what think you of it? Is it as large as the hall of your monastery?"

"No, not so large," replied Cædmon; "but, to my mind, of nobler and more beautiful proportions; less rich in ornament, but far exceeding it in grace. Oh, lady, brave men have walked these halls in days for ever gone! Hearts have here beat high with hope and energy, that soon were destined never to beat again, when summoned to defend them."

Cædmon sighed deeply as he uttered the last words. The Lady Alicia was surprised; and the Lady Adela, whose youth and modesty had hitherto kept her silent, ventured to look up, when, on seeing the shade of melancholy which stole over the fine and open features of the Saxon page, though she knew not the cause of his emotions, she experienced that sympathy with his feelings which in the young and

ingenuous bosom ever springs up, as it were spontaneously, at the mere presence of sorrow. Such a sense of pity never waits till it obtains the sanction of the judgment, for the young always feel before they think, at the sight of distress.

Wishing, therefore, to say something that should be kind to Cædmon, yet not very well knowing what to say, the Lady Adela blushed, as she gave utterance to the first thing that occurred to her, in a voice whose sweetness was delightful to the ear.

“ You have not, may be, gentle stranger, observed the pictures here ; they are held in great estimation by limners. Some of them, too, are objects of curiosity, and of great price. See you that which represents our Lord ?—the Holy Sepulchre is in the background ; he is scourged by an Arabian, supposed to be Mahomet. This picture was painted at the desire of Peter the Hermit ; and was sent by him from court to court among the princes of Europe, to rouse

their indignation, so that they might to a man put on the Red Cross as the soldiers of God, and hasten to the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre."

"It is a picture of marvellous curiosity," said Cædmon; "but surely it would better suit our abbey church than these walls; it is fit for the contemplation of godly men. For my own part, I confess, that the portraits of these warriors interest me more; especially that picture, which is the most striking of them all."

Cædmon pointed as he spoke to a painting on panel, representing a man seated on a war-horse, that he was restraining by bit and bridle, in his impatience for action, well expressed in every limb. The rider was a martial figure; he was depicted wearing a hauberk of chain mail, bare-headed, his mantle waving in the wind, and holding, perched on his wrist, a hawk, the distinction of noble blood.

"How admirable is that picture!" said Cædmon. "Look! how impatient the horse seems

to be, as he paws the ground, eager to start forward with his rider. The creature's head is drawn back till it touches his chest, by the force of bit and rein; he seems as if struggling to free himself from such control. And the rider, how majestic! what a mien! what an aspect! He is a Saxon, too; I am glad of it: his hauberk is of the old fashion, short, with sleeves of linked mail, that reach not so low as the elbow. Harold wore such a coat in the fatal field of Hastings. He, too, would sometimes ride forth bare-headed into action. But Harold could not have looked nobler than yonder Saxon chief, when he did so. My life on it, he whom that picture represents was a gallant warrior. Lady, may I crave his name?"

"It is the portrait of the former proprietor of this castle you so much admire," said the Lady Alicia

"Oswy, the noble thane!" exclaimed Cædmon, with great animation, as a feeling of gratified pride, in seeing how striking a person was

his illustrious grandsire, gave a glance of fire to his eyes, and a flush to his cheeks, as he fixed a speaking look on the Lady Alicia, and said, in a voice deep and impressive from the strength of his emotions,—“Lady, it is the grandson of Oswy who now stands before you!—who now comes as a menial to his father’s halls!”

Surprise for a moment kept the Lady Alicia silent; but there was so much about Cædmon, in person, manner, and feeling, calculated to awaken for him an interest in the bosom of the gentler sex, that he needed not the additional claim of misfortune to touch the generous mind of the lady of the castle in his favour. Knowing, though by the law of conquest and of his king’s pleasure, that her late husband had become honourably possessed of the fortress, of which she was now the châtelain and mistress, yet she could not, as a woman, see the natural heir, innocent as he was of all offence, stand before her as a menial, without a sense of compassion,—

of embarrassment that was most painful. And now, for the first time in her life, she felt a conviction of the truth, that the conquests of the Norman barons over the unfortunate Saxon thanes, might convey to their heirs the lands and castles of the conquered, but they could never transfer with them that ease and self-satisfaction, that dignity in the possession, which always accompanies an inheritance transmitted from father to son, in the natural order of things. Strange and mingled were the emotions which now agitated her bosom. She felt the strongest interest for the personal merits of the young man, pity for his misfortunes, and the fear to wound afresh his already deeply wounded feelings; with something of a sense of shame, arising from the consciousness that she was standing in his place, in what he deemed should be his own halls. All these thoughts and feelings contributed to embarrass her; and she who would have felt herself perfectly at ease in the courts of kings and princes, now scarcely knew to what

subject to turn for relief in the presence of a poor Saxon page.

But, had she known better the character of Cædmon's mind, she needed not to have distressed herself on his account. A strong and overpowering feeling had, at the moment he was told whom the picture represented, assailed him; and, on the sudden impulse, he had declared his descent from Oswy. But this done, all was over. He knew too well the extent of his misfortunes to dwell upon their hopelessness. He knew how vain must be the powerless aspirations of a mind that no circumstances befriended, in times such as those in which he lived; and, in addition to a sense of religious duty, Cædmon had a stout and resolved spirit, together with that pride of mind which determines to rest upon itself alone for support and consolation under the most trying circumstances of human life.

There was the more merit in such an exercise of fortitude, because he was so keenly sensible

of the whole weight of his misfortunes. The place in which he now stood was new to him, but not the thoughts the sight of it had so suddenly called up with so much poignancy and vigour:—the thoughts of his grandsire slain, his castle lost; his father outlawed, dead,—of himself, an orphan, poor, dependent, the outcast of a despised race, living among enemies who had wrought for him and his unhappy countrymen all their woes. These were the recollections that rushed across the mind of Cædmon, and shook his inmost soul, as he stood before the portrait of the illustrious Oswy. But they passed away; he had turned from them with a sickening sensation, and the heart that had for a moment beat high with pride, sunk again, as he said in a voice of affectionate emotion, “Lady, is there no portrait of my father?”

On receiving the assurance that there was none, Cædmon turned aside, walked up to another picture, and stood before it, with his back towards the company, as if he were engaged in looking

intently upon it; but really with no other view than to hide his face from observation, and to gain a short pause to recover his resolution, to become once more master of himself; for the powerful emotions of a mind such as his, proud, sensitive, and firm, shrinks from observation; and Cædmon was altogether of a character that would find no retreat too obscure, so it might afford him the opportunity to devour unmarked by any eye the pangs of such a moment.

The Lady Alicia, glad as himself to be relieved, retreated to write an answer to the abbot;—and, moreover, writing being then so rare an accomplishment, no lady or gentleman who possessed it would willingly let slip an opportunity of displaying such scholarship. On the present occasion, therefore, she had a double motive for the task. The Lady Adela, who felt that uncomfortable sensation which hangs on every individual of a company where something has gone wrong, that is of too delicate a nature to be noticed by any one present, now endeavoured to relieve

her own sense of awkwardness by the exercise of her fingers rather than her tongue, and worked on the faster, being most intently engaged on the embroidery of a mantle designed for her aunt.

Patch was talking to one of the hawks, which had flown down from its perch and settled on his wrist, probably mistaking the fool for a much nobler person. Nurse Cicely stood fanning herself, as usual, when she thought she ought to be occupied ; and she did just the same whenever she fancied she had nothing to do. Everybody was silent, excepting Patch with his hawk.

Things were in this not very agreeable position, when one of the servitors, or borrel churls, (for borrel was the livery of the Lady Alicia,) announced the arrival of the new bower-maiden to wait on my Lady Adela ; and soon after Grace Bolt made her appearance ; for, anxious to avoid the importunities of Sir Simon, she had sought a service, and had here gained it by the influence of Dame Cicely, who was her most especial friend.

Grace entered the hall with her two hands crossed before her, making a curtesy at every step, and blushing till cheeks, neck, and ears reddened at the utter confusion and dismay she experienced on finding she was in such a presence, and had the whole length of the hall to walk up by herself, with everybody looking at her, before she could reach the Lady Adela, who had directed her to come forward, as soon as she appeared.

Grace's entrance was a relief to all but herself ; for the miller's daughter was something that might be talked to at this embarrassing moment without the least fear of its leading to any painful subject. And with many little idle questions and simple answers of "No" and "Yes," accompanied by a blush and a curtesy at every word, on the part of the damsel, did the Lady Adela contrive to fill up the time till the Lady Alicia returned with her letter to the Lord Abbot. This she very courteously delivered to his page, and bidding him a good-morrow with the gentlest tone and air, dismissed him, without further delay,

from her presence and her castle. She next drew the Lady Adela aside, in earnest conference ; and soon after both aunt and niece quitted the hall, leaving Grace Bolt to the care and tuition of Nurse Cicely, who, following the example of her betters, after dismissing Patch, (but not quite so civilly as her mistress did Cædmon,) undertook to make the new bower-woman acquainted with all the duties and mysteries of her office.

Left to themselves, Dame Cicely commenced her task by playing off all the consequential airs that a knowledge of her own station as an ancient and indulged domestic, and the extreme ignorance of Grace Bolt, would allow her to display. She next permitted Grace to exhaust all her notes of admiration on everythings he saw, with an “ Oh la ! ” and “ Oh dear ! ” and, “ I never saw the like ! ” “ And what a large place it is ! ” added Grace, looking around with wondering eyes. “ I seem as if I were nothing as I stand in the middle of such a hall as this. And how dark the roof is ! —it looks almost black ! What great beams ! And

only see, how the spiders hang about everywhere, and make webs among the tapestry ! And what a large window !—all full of images in coloured glass, like a church ! And there is the blessed Virgin, too, in it, with her blue gown covered with silver stars, and a gold hoop all round her head !—how pretty ! And what a number of bows and staves and lances hang on the old walls ! And what a figure that is that stands up just below the great window ! I declare it looks as natural as live armour, as if it was just a going to walk. Well, now, I would not come across this hall all alone by myself, after dusk, for all the world. I should be frightened to death. How gloomy this old hall must look in the dark !”

“ But there is nothing in it to frighten you, young maiden,” said the nurse. “ We don’t allow superstructions”—probably meaning superstitions—“ here. We have too much good sense for those idle fears. There is no church-yard near us, nor have we any place like Pixon meadow in these parts, where no Christian body

would like to go after sun-down," added Nurse Cicely, in a solemn tone ; for though her familiarity with the old hall and the gloomy apartments of the castle prevented her feeling any terror in going about it, even at the regular hours for spirits to walk abroad, yet was the good dame as grossly superstitious about hobgoblins, pixies, white women, and grey men, as any Devonian could be, with whom an entire belief in all legends of this nature, as they had been handed down to the Saxons by the ancient Britons, was never to be questioned. "There is nothing to fear here," added Nurse Cicely. "My lady and I used to take my young lady roundly to task for her fearful notions about the castle, when she first came from Normandy to live in this place, and you must not go to put any of your idle fancies into her head again, as bower-maidens are apt to do with their ladies when they go to trim them. And what can you do to fit you for my Lady Adela's service?"

"I can sew and knit," replied Grace, "and

can make a smock-frock, or a flour-sack, as I used to do for father. I can handle a broom, and can bridle, saddle, and lade the ass as well as father himself, or our knave at the mill."

Nurse Cicely tossed her head, and glanced on the girl a look of contempt:—"Thou hast a pretty commodity of qualities to fit thee for a bower-maid, truly ! But it was my pity for thy ignorance, made me pass over many things, and take thee for my young mistress's service. But thou must learn other matters, ere thou wilt be fit to trim my lady for the court."

Grace looked abashed, but curtesied, and assured her patroness she would readily learn, might she but have the teaching.

"It shall not be lacking," said Dame Cicely with an air of importance ; "I will instruct thee myself. Thou must learn how to manage thy lady's ribands, and to crisp her hair without burning it with the iron ; and how to put on her caul and her mantle in its right folds, so that it may blow out like a sail, and show the flower-

ing upon it, when she walks to church. And thou must learn to trim me, also," added the nurse, with a flourish of the fan, "for 'tis a part of thy duty; for my young lady's maid is ever my maid, when I take upon me to recommend her, excepting the wages. And in return, I undertake to settle all that she is to do and to leave undone in her office; and respecting the same thou wilt need some further directions."

Another curtesy from Grace, and a civil assurance of strict obedience, procured for her a nod of approbation, and a further string of instructions from the self-sufficient dame.

"Thou must be no babbler, Grace," said the old woman; "to be such is not seemly in a young woman who sees and hears her lady at all times; and, when she is out of humour, hears a great deal her lady would never desire her to have heard when she comes to herself again, and thinks about it."

"Such matters shall never pass my lips," replied Grace, prudently.

“Right, child, right,” said Dame Cicely; “thou must never prate about them to anybody,—not to my young lady’s aunt for all the world. You must tell them to nobody but myself, who never say a word about what I hear; and it is your duty, Grace, to tell me, for I got you the service, and could get you out of it again, did I mind so to do. But never fear; be a good girl, and trust me, who am as a sort of mother to you, and you need not much mind anybody else in the family. And, before you do anything my young lady orders you to do, be sure and ask me if I approve of it.”

Grace looked demure, but gave no ready “Yes” to this part of her instructions; but inquired if she might have leave sometimes to go to see her father at the mill, or to have a holiday at the fairs.

“No,” was the short and snappish answer. “It is not seemly for young damsels to be running to fairs. But, as to thy father, Grace, he is a likely man, an honest, and well to do in the

world; and when thou wantest to see him, I do not know but I may walk to the mill myself and tell him so; for as he is something up in years, and a widower of good repute, there can be no harm be said about me for the matter; and he can come and see thee here, which will be better than thy gadding."

Grace ventured to say she liked to go abroad sometimes.

"Ay, at right and proper seasons, wench," said the nurse; "to mass, penance, or confession; but not to fairs; for I would not have you be running after idle minstrels, and dancing boys, and mocking apes, and shows, with turgeters and May-games, as the maids do now. It was far other in my young days. We were as staid then at fifteen as at fifty."

"And may I not go sometimes to a wedding, or to a May-game?" inquired Grace, in a very supplicatory tone and manner.

"A wedding!" exclaimed the nurse in an accent of surprise,— "a wedding! What will the

foolish thing ask next, I trow? A wedding! we never so much as talk of such a thing here. We admit no suitors at the castle. We said 'nay' to Sir Geoffrey Malduit, one of the fiercest barons of the west, when he but the other day would have given all his broad lands, and stout castles to boot, to have wedded our Lady Adela. But we said 'nay.' Most likely she will be a nun at last. We pray day and night to the Virgin in our household, and think of little else than cells and beads. We are all maidens here, and never think of weddings."

"But the old lady was married once," said Grace, curtesying.

"Old lady!" exclaimed the nurse; "call the Lady Alicia de Beaumont, the handsomest woman in all Devonshire, old lady! Marry, and what should I be called then; I who nursed her when she was a babe, were she to be called old? In good sooth, how pert be these wenches, that, like cockerels, have hardly burst their egg-shells! all's old with them, I trow"

“ I thought age was reverend,” said Grace ; “ and indeed, I meant no offence ; for I held you, Dame Cicely, to be more reverend than anybody else in the castle.”

“ Hold me reverend, slut !” said the nurse, fanning herself in high wrath ; “ I would have you to understand, that I am no more reverend than yourself, Mistress Grace, of the mill ! But I will keep my temper, seeing how ignorant you are.”

Grace begged pardon with all humility, and the nurse dismissed her for the present with this final charge,—“ And we must have that dress of thine amended. Truly, thou art too fine ! tricked up like Maid Marian at a May-game. Thou must wear a plain kirtle of durance, instead of that cendal court-pie ; and over thy stammel petticoat only a tunic of brown serge. Those foolish rings in thy ears,—they are of pretty gold, Antwerp work I see,—they become thee not. We will have them taken out, and I will wear them for thee. It better suits a foolish wench like thee to study

godliness than how to make herself look pretty and fine. Do this, and thou shalt do well and wisely. And now go thy ways."

Grace, somewhat chapfallen, and disappointed more especially at this intimation of a reformation to be made in her dress, that was to begin with the plunder of her ears, looked pettish, and prepared to make a sullen and silent retreat, when the old nurse once more called her back: "And be sure, wench," she said, "to keep the servitors and the bachelors of the household at a distance; and do not let the fool, Patch, kiss you."

Another curtesy, and another assent to her instructions on the part of Grace, finished the colloquy; and both went about their several duties in the household.

CHAPTER III.

“Go bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“WHO hath seen the palmer this morning?” was the first question asked by Abbot Baldwin, after he had returned from matins, where he had not observed him among the other pilgrims.

“That have I, most holy father,” said the seneschal, who stood near. “For being exempt from attendance at matins to-day, on account of having my duty to perform without doors, such as to make your reverence’s presents to certain knights having their lodgment in the town, and also to give notice to the tenants and vassals on what day I purposed to hold your reverence’s court—”

“How prolix thou art grown of late, old man,”

said Baldwin ; “ I ask if thou hast seen our palmer guest, and thou tellest me about holding our courts and making our customary presents. Do keep the straight road in thy speech, for we neither like a starting nag, nor a roundabout speaker. Where didst thou see the palmer ? ”

“ In brief, then, my lord, I saw him at early dawn, casting his pebbles ; some of which I conclude he must have laboured to bring with him all the way from Syria, to help make up our Mount Joy, to which all our palmers contribute a stone or two, to complete their heap of thankfulness and joy, on their safe return from the Holy Land. I was in haste, and as the Mount Joy stands near to the hermitage of St. John, I did not pause to give the palmer a ‘ good morrow,’ fearing the hermit might come forth and join in our discourse, and so delay me ; for the hermit is a great prater, and very circumstantial in the plainest matter of discussion.”

“ Even like thyself, worthy seneschal,” said Baldwin ; “ therefore thou likest him not. Is it

not so? I never knew two great talkers who desired the company of each other; a good listener were better society for either. In this particular, the old saying holds not good, for like does not affect like. And so the palmer is gone? But where is Sir Henry de Pomeroy? We will but take a slight refection, and then bid the grooms bring round the horses to the gates; and we will forward to hunt the stag, over the grounds of our good neighbour the Lady Alicia de Beaumont."

Accordingly, the abbot made a short breakfast on that morning; and the chief grooms, whilst preparing the horses for the chase, had, as usual to listen to the growling and grumbling of an old Saxon huntsman, the best the country round, and therefore retained in his office at the abbey, notwithstanding his perpetual outcry against the Norman tyranny of the New Forest Laws.

"So we are to hunt to-day," said old Willibald, following the strain of his accustomed humour; "to hunt over the domain of my Lady

de Beaumont; and the Norman dame's permission has been asked and had so to do. Good Saxon lands are they, for all that. Much rather would I see the pack loosed on them, to hunt off the usurping holders of the property, than the poor foolish deer."

"Why, you did not use to care much who was the owner of the lands you hunted over, so long as there was good sport, Willibald," said one of the grooms; "how is it that you are grown so nice about it now?"

"Because," answered Willibald, "the great people have grown so reckless about the poor folk in their sports. Hunting and hawking used to be followed only as sports, in my young days; but now knights and barons seem to think it is the only thing they have to do in this land; and they pursue the wild beasts of the forest with more fury than they do a Jew or a Saracen, which is a great sin. Why, I tell you, Dick the groom, the hunters now-a-days have become as savage and as fierce as the very

brutes they chase. Only see how they serve the poor husbandmen, and their flocks and herds; they drive them from their green pastures and pleasant fields, that wild boars may range among them undisturbed."

"Ay," said a helper of old Willibald, who had caught from him something of his humour,—"ay, and if these cruel hunters pass a poor man's door, look to it well; let him hasten to bring forth the best the house can afford, and readily, or woe be to him, he is a ruined man, or is straight accused of some foul treason."

"But my Lord Abbot is no such hunter as these," said Dick the groom; "he likes only the red deer; and is not one of those who, as Geoffrey Malduit, think it a greater crime in a vassal to transgress the forest laws in the least particular than it is to kill a man that is a bondman; for dogs and slaves, you know, both wear the collar, the badge of their masters."

"I would wear a rope rather round my neck,

and be hung by it, too, than such a necklace," said old Willibald. "But I am a free man; I will say that for my Lord Abbot, he gave me my freedom, and that makes me such a slave to all his whims; for St. Dunstan never hear me when I curse a dog at fault, or an enemy in a tussel, if I could be ungrateful. And the monks are not the worst masters after all, and they don't make such a coil about the forest laws as the great Norman barons do, Dick."

"No, not such a coil as Geoffrey Malduit, who, for fear the justices and the sheriffs should not be hard enough, is constantly sending about the game officer to pray them to put the laws in force."

"Ay," said Willibald; "so that fines for disturbing the game, degradation for a ceorl, slavery for a husbandman, and death for a slave, if any one of them transgress the forest laws, are things not likely to be forgotten in this kingdom. Curse the Dane Canute! I say,—though men do call him great,—who first thought of such

laws. And the foul fiend keep the spirit of the Norman William in his hottest purgatory ! for he made those laws even yet more galling to man and beast ; for the very dogs suffer by them, and are maimed, unless they belong to privileged masters.”

“ I would as soon see my own foot maimed, as my dog’s,” said Dick.

“ It is almost as great a piece of cruelty,” continued Willibald ; “ as cruel as that introduced after King Harold’s time, when the Normans had a trick of making deaf the horses of the Saxons ; and then said, they thought it was their way so to do, forsooth.”

“ There have been Norman barons who have found out that it is the best way for some of the poorer folk to have neither eyes nor ears,” said Dick ; “ and so they treat us worse than they did the Saxons’ horses.”

“ We have ears and eyes,” said Willibald, “ but we have no hearts, no spirits to deal with oppressions, as readily as to hear and see them, else would

every Saxon rise, to a man, in these kingdoms, and soon shake off the Norman yoke."

Here the social grumblings and discontents of Willibald and his friend Dick were disturbed by an obedientiary, who came to hasten their preparations for the field. In a little time all was ready, and a gallant train of hunters set forward to the chase.

Though we will not say that our abbot was as famous a hunter as Nimrod, or even as Walter, Bishop of Rochester, who, in the twelfth century, was so celebrated for his love of the chase that, when above eighty years old, he made it the sole business of his life, leaving his diocese in spiritual matters to take care of itself; yet Abbot Baldwin loved hunting. In his fondness for the field he rather resembled a churchman he greatly admired and constantly imitated, more especially in his taste for opposition and quarrels — the famous Thomas-à-Becket, who sought the chase merely as a recreation and a relief to the more weighty matters in which

he was engaged; so that when Becket went on an embassy to the king of France he took with him, amongst the other attendants of his costly train, dogs and hawks proper for the field.

Our abbot, accompanied by the prior, several other ecclesiastics, Sir Henry de Pomeroy, and a train of nearly fifty persons, now came forth, equipped with bows and arrows, the latter being the missiles always used in hunting the stag.

On this day neither the abbot nor Sir Henry had forgotten that, though their apparent object was a hunting match, their more essential one was to obtain for Sir Henry a fair opportunity for his forming an acquaintance with the ladies of the castle. Neither, therefore, had neglected his dress. The light suit of Lincoln green, the baldrick richly worked, from which hung his bugle, the cap with its waving plume, the bow and the quiver, altogether became the fine person of Sir Henry de Pomeroy. And as to my Lord Abbot, the hunting suit in which he had arrayed

himself (not having about it one thing that was ecclesiastical, excepting the hood, and the pendent cross on his breast,) was so gay and fashionable that, but for his vows, Sir Henry might have fancied he had some design of rivalry in view, in thus tricking himself out to appear before the eyes of a fair lady; whilst in the equipments of his horse (he rode a swift Spanish jennet, light of limb, and black and shining as the wing of a raven,) he had adopted the most aristocratic and costly style of the age; for, not content with a short hunting-housing, he had for his saddle a piece of fantastic extravagance, which was about this time introduced into England by the crusaders, from the East—a beautifully painted saddle, the subject of which, according to the then prevalent fashion, was chosen from Pagan history; so that, in a scene from the siege of Troy, Paris, Helen, Achilles, and Agamemnon, all went a hunting with Abbot Baldwin, on the back of his sprightly jennet. His bridle was of red cordovan leather, hung with little silver bells;

and knots, of the same bright colour, appeared above the ears of the animal thus gaily trimmed. Altogether, both horse and rider were much too remarkable to do other than attract the most general observation.

The varlet who rode at the head of the train bore the abbot's banner cheerily in his hand; and immediately after him came old Willibald, having slung across his shoulders both baldrick and bugle; although, whilst any of the attendants of laymen carried bugles, it was deemed indecorous for an abbot's servant to blow a horn. A body of hunters and servitors carried the bows and arrows of the company; and the noble *alauntes*, or stag-hounds, were led on tied together in leash, or in couples. These were of the kind then beginning with the connoisseur hunters of the day somewhat to supersede the more swift and graceful greyhound. The *alauntes* were of a strong, sturdy breed; slow in their movements till let loose from the slips, but sure in the business of the chase. They had a fine deep musical bay, with long

ears, thick heads, and eyes of jet in blackness ; unlike the greyhound, which hunts by sight, these dogs pursued their prey by the scent alone.

We must here, however, leave the Lord Abbot to wend on his way, to ride stately out of the abbey gates, and to salute by an inclination of his head, and a *benedicite*, all the good people, men, women, and children who, bowing or curtesying, came forth at their doors, or at their windows, to see him and his gallant train pass along, whilst we say something of the Lady Alicia de Beaumont. Her leave having been obtained for the sports, she set all the hunters and officers under the forester to work, to make all ready ; intending that herself, the fair Adela, and a few of her ladies, should ride forth to welcome the Lord Abbot, and to meet him with a gay countenance in the field.

The Lady Alicia exceedingly lamented that from the shortness of the notice it was impossible for her to display her suite in the usual state

of the period ; for there had been no time to allow of the erection of a temporary building of wood, for the reception of herself and her maidens. Such a building at a hunting match was customary for all ladies of condition ; whence they could issue forth to receive the hunters, or retire to it and witness the chase. Even the dogs were here frequently secured till the moment they were loosed ; and as these temporary pavilions were usually covered with green boughs, they were called the “ thrysting.” But we must now hasten to the field.

The morning had dawned with the fairest promise ; only a few light and fleecy clouds were floating slowly in the sky ; and the mist which hung about the tors indicated a day that would prove clear and genial, when those vapours should disperse before the warmth of a May sun.

Nothing could be more cheering than was such a morning to the company, who now set forth from the castle. The breeze fanned, but scarcely blew ; the air was scented with the fragrance

of the white-blossomed hawthorn and the early flowers of spring ; the Tavy was shining bright, and running gladly along its bed of rocks and stones ; not a rill of water but crept from its hiding place, under banks entangled with briers and weeds, or thickly set with their clusters of *primeroles* (to use old Chaucer's word, for that palest and prettiest of yellow flowers) ; and all the streamlets came forth to run their course as joyously as did the river itself in the light of the sun. The dew still overspread the grass, sparkled on the hedges, or hung as a jewel on every flower.

The beautifully-limbed and richly-coloured cattle, so peculiar to Devon, were seen in the meadows, and the tinkling of sheep-bells among the hills gave a pleasing intimation of those numerous flocks which, from time immemorial, have constituted the chief wealth of the landholders of the west.

As the party rode forward they now and then saw a hare or a rabbit, that had been

started from its covert, scud timidly across the grass, and hie for shelter to the hollows and bushes that lay on every side ; whilst the birds, secure on this day from all molestation, (as the company carried no hooded hawks to let fly upon them at pleasure,) safe in their airy realm, and seeming as if conscious there was a peace proclaimed to the feathered nations, gladly gave notice of it to their mates and companions by their warblings and songs, and by answering each other's call in a cheering note, from tree to tree.

The bee, with its humming ditty, sped from bush to bank, to taste how sweet the dew might be that lay in the bell of the hyacinth, or on the wild thyme or the may. And the dragon-fly, with its gossamer wings, and its body of gold and gems, darted by ; and the yellow butterfly, ever the first seen in spring, seemed as it sported among the sunny flowers, as if one of the prim-roses had become instinct with life, and had taken wing, on this fair morning. Indeed, so delightful

was the scene, and all its accompaniments, that every heart rejoiced under the influences of the invigorating air and the soul-inspiring face of nature.

The king of forests, the stately stag, that was on this day to become the object of the sports, was soon unharboured. Three long notes on the bugle gave the signal for uncoupling the hounds. And now, not only the abbot and his train, but many of the household from the castle, were seen urging forward their gallant steeds to join the hunt. Some rushed from the heights, others started from the valleys and glens; all appeared animated by one impulse, an ardour for the chase; a passion which, in all countries and ages, in his savage or in his civilized state, seems natural to man.

The uncoupling the dogs, as they stood with their deep-mouthed bayings, proclaiming their impatience, "straining on the slips," was the work of a few minutes, and "Cheerily, Hector!"—"Away, Tristram!"—"On, Brute!"—"Hyke,

a Rowland!"—formed a joyous acclaim from the throats of the huntsmen, as they hallooed on the hounds.

The hart had already sprang forward at the sight of his enemies, his dappled sides shaking with sudden fear; and tossing high his head as his antlers broke through, crushed or tore down many a branch that crossed his path, and was opposed to his flight in the forest where he had been started from his lair. Horsemen and horses strained after him in pursuit; scarcely did the hoofs of the animals imprint the ground, whilst the dogs, with that swift springing motion which makes them seem to skim rather than to tread the earth, with wide-expanded nostrils, snuffing over turf and mire, so as to keep the scent, gave no rest to the hunted hart, which, still flying before them, through forest, stream, and vale, at length took the direction towards the moor, and was speedily on that part of it called Cudlipp Town.

Soon did the horsemen follow; all were now

engaged in the very heat of the chase: the winding bugle, the shouts of the hunters, the baying of the dogs, altogether made up a chorus that rang through the woods, and shook like distant thunder the echoes of the sylvan scene.

It was at this crisis there was seen sweeping over the moor, in the direction from Wilsworthy, the noble mistress of that castle, accompanied by her fair ward and a train of damsels and attendants. They were attired with hood and mantle of Lincoln green, suited to a hunting field; but their manner of advance, their gestures and their speed, indicated a cause of alarm rather than of sport. No one was left in doubt as to its object, when the Lady Alicia, while she advanced, called out to one of the huntsmen, who drew near her—"Save the hart!—draw off the dogs!—it is Saladin, my favourite hart, they are hunting to the death;—not for the value of half my lands, would I have him slain!"

The huntsman no sooner heard his lady's commands, than off he set to endeavour to fulfil them. And whilst he is bent on this errand of mercy we must, as briefly as we may, state the cause of the hunted animal's being so great a favourite with his mistress; as some of the most important events of our history are connected with this day's sport.

Saladin had been a beautiful fawn, which, from the kindness of the Lady Alicia and her niece, had become so tame that he would follow them through the park, and even eat from their hands. A paddock had been especially devoted to his service; where, daily visited by the ladies, he became more and more gentle by their constant care. Some one, however, (it was never known who did the mischief,) at length, in mere wantonness, turned him loose into the forest among his fellow deer. Tame animals, when so turned adrift, ever become the wildest; and Saladin, in a short space of time, forgot all his gentle nurture, and grew the most dangerous, as well

as the largest and noblest of the whole herd of deer.

In vain had the foresters hitherto attempted to reclaim him by fair means ; and by foul ones his lady would not suffer him to be approached ; still hoping that, after a while, he would of his own free will return to his old haunts and domestic habits near the castle. All the foresters knew their lady's pleasure respecting Saladin, and would as soon have thought of chasing the heroic Soldan himself, after whom the hart was named, as of turning the favourite out for a hunt. They had been directed to caution the abbot's huntsmen respecting this most remarkable stag ; but by some unlucky chance there had been a good deal of blundering in all that old Wilibald had to do, or to think upon that day. His head was filled with the forest laws, and his heart with wrath for their cruelty ; so that, by giving a half attention to what was said to him, he had so completely misunderstood the caution of the Lady Alicia's forester, that, acting by

the rule of contrary, (to which all blunderers and self-willed persons seem to be sworn,) he had actually taken some pains to unharbour the very stag he had been requested to spare.

The huntsman whom his lady had despatched to draw off the dogs, knowing how anxious she felt on the subject, made it a point to shout his commands to every one he met mounted, without staying to ascertain if any such rider might be of the number of those who followed the sports.

Now these shouts happened to meet the ear of one who, seated on a fine swift horse, seemed as if he were proceeding to join the hunters, having in all probability been drawn to the spot by hearing the dogs and the bugles in full chorus along the fields. Be this as it may, the rider heard very distinctly the cry—"It is the will of my Lady Alicia that the stag should be spared"—upon which, without making any reply to it, he called to his side his varlet, who rode after him, bearing his bow. He took the bow in

his own hands, and forthwith rode rapidly towards the scene of action, where all the hunters might now be seen gathering with a speed as unsparing as if they had been impelled forward by the very spirit of Nimrod himself to a mighty chase.

The rider who had thus suddenly appeared was a young man of a handsome aspect, though his features were of a somewhat wild cast; his complexion had been burnt by the sun to the brownness of a ripe nut; and though he wore the civil costume of the period, yet his air, his demeanour, and the *manége* of his horse were altogether knightly. He looked like a crusader returned, after hard service in the Holy Land. We must, however, for the present leave him, and see how it fares with the hunted animal, and if his reprieve is likely to reach him in time for his preservation.

The stag, closely pursued, had been driven into a recess, formed at the end of a lane, near which it opened on the moor. The recess in

question was, as it were, walled in by a high bank overhung with trees, so that there was no retreat in the rear; and in the front both dogs and men had been pouring down upon the imprisoned animal from all sides of the open space.

Thus was the hunted hart hemmed in, as the bugle sounded to bay, with a blast that was heard far and wide. The animal, at once desperate and furious, now made a stand that was one of danger to his eager pursuers. With limbs quivering, sides panting, with eyes wild and straining, as if ready to burst their sockets in the agony of fear, the stag, now retreating, now rushing on, bending his head and butting with his antlers, reckless if man, horse, or hound became the object of destruction, threatened death to every living thing that approached him.

Some of the boldest of the hounds repeatedly attempted to fly at his throat, while others kept back, making their stand and baying with all their strength. Still the stag was unconquered.

Several of the dogs he gored, others he disabled, and, though nearly exhausted and about to fall to the ground, even yet he made a gallant and last struggle for his life. Whilst he was so struggling an arrow whizzed through the air: it was truly aimed, for it struck the noble animal in the very centre of the frontal bone and penetrated to the brain. The wounded hart sank at once, as the tears burst from his eyes at the sudden pang, and ere they could run down his hairy face, the dogs, one and all, rushed in upon their fallen prey, and in another minute throttled him.

The hunters now crowded round, and drew off the hounds, lest they should mangle the carcass; and as their shouts of triumph, accompanied by the blowing of the bugle in the victorious morte-note of a hunting field, rang over hill and vale, a gallant train rode forward, but all too late for the object which had brought them to the spot. It was the Lady Alicia and her suite. Dismay was in her cries, wrath in

her countenance, and she trembled with passion, as she said,—“The hart has fallen by a malicious hand.” All seemed surprised; and she added, in that deep, low but decisive tone, which makes itself audible even in the midst of a tumult, “I saw the man; he darted suddenly forward from behind yonder trees. It was Geoffrey de Malduit who slew my noble hart! After him!—secure him! he has transgressed the forest laws; he has no right to hunt on my domain. He shall dearly suffer for this, or, by Our Lady, I am no true woman!—Secure him—he shall face me here.”

“He does face you here, lady,” said the bold horseman we have already noticed (as the stranger who proceeded to join the sport), as he now rode up to the Lady Alicia, and with so much audacity, that not a man who was present but vented an exclamation expressive of his indignant feelings at the sight. Some cried “Shame!” others, “Outlaw!” and one used the word “Coward!”—that one was Sir Henry de Pomeroy. In

another minute more than a dozen hunters surrounded Malduit; some pulled out their knives, others bent their bows, and an old forester approached to pull him off his horse.

“Touch me not!” exclaimed the intruder.
“Touch me not!” If any man lay hand on me, be he knight, varlet, or bondman, he dies on the spot!” Malduit drew forth a short dagger and flourished it over his head, more like a mummer in a dagger-dance than a warrior among men. Yet all present knew him to be a bold fellow, brutal and insolent. “And what sort of curs are ye all, I trow,—I exempt my Lord Abbot,—that you thus surround me with your drawn knives? your very hounds would teach you a more manly play, for they hunted not yonder stag without giving him law,—a chance by flight to escape their fangs. But you,—you hem in a man,—a whole pack of you, with an odds of twenty to one against him. And you, Sir Knight of the green jacket,—you who give the name of coward with so little ceremony,—what have you to say to me? I am

a stranger to you, but, trust me, I am a belted knight; will you answer for that word so insolently spoken, in a way that a gentleman may notice with honour to himself?"

"My sword is my tongue with such a one as you have proved yourself to be this day, and with no other will I answer," replied Sir Henry. "You have shown malice and discourtesy towards this lady; you have wilfully slain the animal she would have spared. I will answer you in any way of arms,—but it is not well to prate of such matters in such a gentle presence,—if you dare avouch yourself a knight."

"Dare avouch myself a knight!" exclaimed Malduit, interrupting him, as a glance of fire flashed from his eyes; "why, what else should I avouch myself? All the world knows I have given and taken blows with Saladin himself in Syria. And do you think a doubt can rest on my honour! Go to, foolish boy—for you are but a boy to me," continued the braggart; "what if I should think you unworthy of a better

meeting than one for chastisement to such a malapert tongue. Hark ye ! Sir Knight of the cream face ; crop your woman's locks and cultivate a beard ; be something more like a man than you are now, and may be I may then think it worth while to talk to you in another strain."

Sir Henry de Pomeroy's countenance displayed all the changes of violent passion as Geoffrey Malduit, in a tone of calm scorn, pronounced these taunts, as if he felt quite careless about the matter, and even doubtful if Sir Henry might be of sufficient consequence for him to fight such an adversary in arms. But the passions of all present were too much roused to be easily appeased ; all seemed bent on one purpose, that of taking an immediate vengeance on Geoffrey de Malduit.

In vain did the Lady Alicia interpose to prevent a further quarrel, till, fearing one of those affrays so common to the period, and commanding her own disturbed feelings, in the hope to

prevent mischief, she implored the Lord Abbot to use his authority, and to restore peace in the name of the holy church ; resolving, however, within her own mind, that she would, on the first convenient opportunity, call her sturdy enemy to a legal account for this breach of the forest laws.

For some time, in vain also, did my Lord Abbot call on all men to hear in his person the voice of peace and of the church. At length, he so far prevailed, that all thoughts of an immediate vengeance were laid aside. After the first burst of their indignation had exhausted itself in angry words, the hunters and foresters contented themselves with standing together in knots, apart from the lady and the nobles, and communicated to each other the suggestions of their suppressed rage, in low murmurs, like thunder muttering among the tors of Dartmoor after a storm has rolled off, but has not subsided in the distance.

Malduit listened in sullen silence to what the

abbot urged upon his consideration, that he ought to make some considerable compensation to the Lady Alicia for the wrong he had done on her estate ; and, as a further proof of penitence, he ought to send an offering in gold to the altar of St. Julien, the patron saint of all hunters, in the abbey church.

Geoffrey Malduit had no desire to quarrel with my Lord Abbot ; he therefore very civilly told him, that though he honoured a churchman as much as any man, he would never think of troubling him for any advice when without the walls of his abbey. Nevertheless, for the sake of my Lord Abbot's peace, and out of respect to his person, he, Geoffrey, would, in obedience to his wishes, withdraw himself from the present company without more words ; wherefore he would at once take his leave. So saying, and giving a glance of scorn and insolence at the ladies, not omitting one of the same description at Sir Henry de Pomeroy, he withdrew from the party, whose sports he had so maliciously

interrupted, and indeed destroyed for the day, debating with himself as he withdrew what he should do next to express his bitterness and his revenge, for the wrongs he fancied he had sustained from the ladies of Wilsworthy Castle. In truth, so deadly was the hatred he cherished in his own breast against them that he would have found it difficult to decide which of the two he hated most—the Lady Adela, who had refused his proffered hand, or the Lady Alicia, who had encouraged her niece in that refusal.

The foresters, hunters, and attendants, who had been conferring apart among themselves, the moment after Malduit withdrew from the spot, rushed with one accord round the fallen stag. There taking their stand, each, to a man, drew forth his long hunting knife, and extending and crossing them over the body of the deer, as in one deep voice, so unanimous was their feeling, they called on St. Julien to bear witness that they would hereafter resent to the death, in a fair and open field, the injury done

to their lady and mistress, would she but allow the contest, on Geoffrey de Malduit and all his followers, for the hunting of the smitten hart.

A shout of triumph followed this impassioned oath. It was repeated by an echo of a neighbouring rock, so clearly and distinctly that Geoffrey de Malduit started, as he was slowly and sullenly retiring from the scene of the chase.

“What is that?” he said to his varlet, who now again bore his bow.

“The followers of the Lady Alicia have vowed a vow of vengeance against thee and thy people, Sir Geoffrey; I heard them mutter their intent among themselves ere we departed from the field.”

“Is it so?” said Malduit: “then let the devil, whom they have awakened to be godfather to their oath,—for I heard him make response to it,—let him aid their work; I care not. I will back and tell them so.”

Another minute or two brought the reckless Malduit once more before the lady and her train. "Hark ye, my men of the green wood," said Sir Geoffrey, addressing the foresters who stood around; "ye who would do battle for the lady of the smitten hart, I will meet ye all at any time or place: my followers are no cravens; they will not shun a fair field. But know ye, ye who draw the sword, that ye do it for one who has smitten in her day a nobler hart than lies dead in yonder nook."

So saying, the bold and insulting baron turned his horse back, dashed the spurs up to the rowel head into his sides, and rode off, leaving the Lady Alicia astonished at his insolence and daring; and so incensed by it, that she shook with passion in every limb. But though thus startled, she exerted herself to recover her self-possession, and as no lamentation could restore her lost favourite to life, she spent no more words in vain regrets. She felt she could now do no less than hasten to express her sense of

the devoted spirit that her vassals and followers had evinced for her service. And on her also expressing her thanks to the Lord Abbot for his timely interference to prevent a fray on the spot, Baldwin took the opportunity of introducing to her notice his young and gallant friend, Sir Henry de Pomeroy, who had evinced so ready a spirit to maintain her cause in opposition to the brutal Geoffrey de Malduit. The lady received him very graciously, but ere she could offer him her thanks, she was called off by the ceremonies of the hunting field, to give her attention to those who were busied around the deer.

The huntsmen, the prickers, and inferior personages, now all went down upon their knees, as the chief forester blew three clear and distinct mots upon his bugle; then, agreeably to that most ancient custom, which descended even to comparatively modern times, he approached the principal lady in the field, and kneeling at her horse's side, offered her his *couteau de chasse*,

that she might proceed to make the first cut in the breast of the stag.

The Lady Alicia knew perfectly well in what manner custom had long ago required this compliment should be received and returned. Accordingly, she pronounced the usual form of thanks with the very best grace ; and, as usual, expressed a hope that St. Tibb (then the favourite saint held to be propitious to ladies who went hunting or hawking) might cause the fallen hart to prove “one of grease,” and deputing the forester to act for her in the ceremony, prayed him to accept a gold bezant (which she handed to him) for his trouble. And, finally, she requested that all present would proceed to the castle, and drink a cup to refresh themselves after the fatigues of the day. Whilst my Lord Abbot, his friend, and their train, were also invited with every mark of respect.

It was my Lord Abbot’s pleasure to accept the invitation graciously, but not eagerly ; and his friend’s to avail himself of it with a smile,

and an inclination of the head, as he drew off his plumed bonnet, in token of profound respect, an action that showed his bare brow, and his fine and flowing locks to the greatest advantage.

The Lady Alicia having once more assured her noble guests how welcome they would be to her halls, called her favourite hound, Rowland, to her side, and bowing to all present, turned her horse's head in the direction toward Wilsworthy ; and the Lady Adela, and all her damsels, sweeping after her at gentle speed, she left the abbot, Sir Henry, and the rest of the hunters, to see the deer carted, and to follow with it, at their own leisure, to the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

The banquet waits our presence, festal joy
Laughs in the mantling goblet, and the night,
Illumined by the taper's dazzling beam,
Rivals departed day—

BROWNE.

Fill full ! why this is as it should be ; here
Is my true realm, amidst bright eyes and faces,
Happy as fair ! Here sorrow cannot reach.

BYRON'S *Sardanapalus*.

WE will not pause to describe the welcome that the Lord Abbot and Sir Henry de Pomeroy received at the castle, more than to say it was at once hospitable and courtly. At the upper end of the hall, beneath the large window, stood what was called the dais ; a raised platform, over which was spread a rich carpet, from the looms

of Flanders ; and here was placed the table appropriated for the lady of the castle and her guests. Along the centre of the hall were seen tables of oak, the first of which was alone permanent, the rest being nothing more than boards placed on tressels, and removed after every meal. When all the household was assembled, not less than sixty persons sat down daily to dinner. A large silver cup filled with salt, stood in the middle of the tables ; above this, towards the head of the hall, the freemen, yeomen, and officials took their seats ; and below it sat all the vassals, serfs, servitors, and slaves of the castle.

There was grandeur in the *coup d'œil* of such an assemblage of persons and ranks ; from the noble lady and her guests who sat on the dais, to the very herdsman and slave, with all their intermediate grades, dining together beneath the lofty roof of that old gothic hall. The sight was pleasing to the feelings, as it was striking to the eye : for it was almost the only hour, when thus assembled at a common meal, during those

times of heartless oppression and suffering in England, that the higher and the lower orders seemed at all to share a pleasure in common, or to lay aside, on the one hand, the constant exercise of arbitrary power, and on the other a sense of subserviency and fear, that degraded alike both freeman and slave.

After the Lord Abbot had given the benediction at the conclusion of the repast, the inferior part of the assembly withdrew; the temporary tables were removed, and the lady, her noble guests, and the chief personages of the household, alone remained seated over their cups; which the Norman knights seasoned with much conversation, the hard drinking of the Saxons having gone quite out of fashion.

In order that mirth and music might not be wanting to enliven the social hour, the house steward presently introduced a company of wandering joculators whom he had appointed to attend on this occasion. These were a set of vagabond minstrels, who played on the crota, the timbrel,

the tambour, pipe, and harp. They were also excellent in tumbling, dancing, balancing, and tricks of legerdemain. Some of these performances were truly surprising, and in the dark ages were duly ascribed to the power of the devil. There is every cause to believe that the magic lantern was not altogether unknown in these times ; since we read in ancient authors of whole forests of hunters, &c., being made to appear on the walls of an apartment, and then as suddenly to disappear at the pleasure of the wizard juggler, who was therefore deemed to be a much greater conjuror than he really was. Even the old acquaintances of our childhood, Punch and Judy, are of much greater antiquity than is generally suspected, and were frequently set up in the halls of the great barons, to entertain them on a rainy day, when their lack of reading and writing left them very barren of amusements.

On the present occasion, neither the ladies nor the abbot, nor his friend, seemed to feel much interest in these kind of exhibitions ; indeed,

the person most delighted was Grace Bolt, who by the indulgence of the Lady Adela, had been permitted to remain with nurse Cicely and the fool to see the shows. They were now all three standing behind the seats of the grandees.

One of the freaks of the jocolator was to dance with his hands on the floor and his heels in the air; nor was the sword dance forgotten. Grace did not much care about this, but she was so enchanted with the last exhibition of the evening, that she almost forgot the august presence in which she stood, and every now and then vented an exclamation of admiration, and raised and let fall her hands in wonder, and even jigged a little with her feet to the music, as the dancing apes, dressed, in derision, like Saracens and Jews, danced their coranto with an astonishing power of imitation. These sports ended, an amusement of a very different kind ensued; for a troubadour, or wandering minstrel, next appeared, with his harp, to the exceeding delight of the more refined part of the assembly. He

was altogether a superior person, and was no more to be placed on a level with the vagabond joculars and their troop of apes, than a Catalani, or a Pasta, is to be associated with a beggar who sings ballads along the streets.

The Troubadours, or Norman versifiers were the descendants of the ancient Scandinavians or Scalds. They united in themselves the accomplishments of poet and musician ; and so greatly esteemed was the *gai science*, of which they were the regular professors, that nobles and even princes enrolled themselves among the troubadours. These minstrels were also great adepts in the art of Scherazade, that of story-telling. In process of time, however, this art became a separate branch of the minstrel's vocation, and such as professed it were called *Dissours*. The old English poet, Gower, thus alludes to them :—

When every minstrell had playde,
And every dissour had saide
Which was most pleasant in the ear.

The troubadour of whom we now speak,

took the harp, and sang with all the flourishes and science of the period, a *romaunt*, in the Provençal or minstrel language, about a knight who went to the Holy Land, was made prisoner, and was finally delivered by the means of his lady love, who had followed him thither in a pilgrim's guise.

Whilst the troubadour was singing, Sir Henry de Pomeroy entered into a soft and silent discourse with the eyes (so often alluded to by the early poets, that it seems to have been a studied method of making love in the days of chivalry,) with the Lady Adela.

Much as he had heard of her merits, he had no idea that he should find in her a superiority of charms that surpassed even the hope of an imagination that had been prepared by the voice of fame to receive a remarkable impression. Her attention being fixed on the troubadour, gave him the opportunity to watch her without giving pain to her modesty, though she could not for a moment look towards him without

meeting his ardent glance of interest and admiration.

She was, indeed a lovely creature: her form slender, and rather below than above the middle height; small in its proportions, yet so delicate, so graceful in every movement, so light when she stepped, or so easy when she sat, that in figure she conveyed to Sir Henry the idea of a being scarcely woman,—of one belonging to a world, if not purely spiritual, yet formed of a clay finer than that of ordinary mortals. Her complexion was of a transparent clearness, tinged but scarcely coloured in the cheeks, with a roseate hue, like the flower called the maiden's blush, among the roses. Her hair was blond, and her eyes of so deep a blue that they might be compared to the ether of a starlight night; whilst her features, soft, small, and regular, altogether produced a countenance, not striking in character, (like that of her aunt,) but so replete with delicacy and sweetness, that when touched by an expression which arose from the tenderness and warmth of

her heart, it was truly beautiful : beautiful both to the eye and to the mind, for it spoke the language of affection in every look. Yet this countenance, so charming, so bewitching, was not one that would have told well in a picture ; for its greatest charm lay in its expression, and such could no more be caught by the pencil and fixed on the canvass, than could the varying effects of the momentarily changing and lightly tinted clouds, at the dawn of early day ; for, however great may be the skill of the painter, the finer graces of nature can, indeed, never be copied.

Sir Henry de Pomeroy gazed on the lovely Adela till he was enchanted ; and that evening fixed both his hopes and his fate. No longer did the wily abbot's schemes about his becoming possessed of the young heiress's castles, to man them for Prince John, for a moment occupy his imagination. At this hour not the slightest recollection of such matters occurred to his mind. He remembered only that he loved ; he thought, therefore, of no other advantage than such as

was above all price — that of gaining, might it be possible, an interest in the affections of the woman he adored.

His opportunities, however, were on this the first evening of their meeting but few, yet of those few he lost not one to render himself agreeable to her; and love gave to each an expression, a significance, that converts even trifles into things of import; though only to the eyes and hearts of those who either feel love in themselves, or who inspire it in others, do they seem to possess it; for the language of true love often consists more in signs and symbols than in words; it is frequently, like the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians, a sealed book to all but the initiated.

At length, the Lady Alicia observed that Cædmon was in the hall; she had missed him at dinner; and now, to do him grace and favour, she invited him, with the troubadour, to the dais; sending to each by Patch, who acted as cup-bearer on this occasion, a cup of wine, and

observed, as she did so, that she had heard Cædmon's skill on the harp much commended by my Lord Abbot, and therefore did she pray him to afford her the satisfaction of touching its chords in her hall. The rest of the company, as well as the courteous troubadour, joining in the request, Cædmon complied; and, after preluding a little, sang in a voice that possessed considerable harmony and power, a sacred song which has thus been rendered into modern language by one to whom we are indebted for many a poetical version.*

THE MINSTREL'S SONG.

He who on death can fix a fearless eye,
And all his threats defy,
Can laugh at swords and falchions flashing,
At armour elashing,
Whilst war's wild uproar seems to rend the sky;
Surprise him in a deed of shame
(For virtue oft is but a name !)

* The Rev. E. A. Bray.

Thine eye, e'en like the basilisk's so dread,
Shall strike him dead.

Nay, he who, as a Nubian lion bold,
Could never be controll'd,
Powerless his feelings to dissemble,
With fear shall tremble,
As though an ague bid his blood run cold.
Yes, terror, like a poisoned dart,
Shall pierce his inmost heart.
And say, does not too oft a life of fame
Deserve this death of shame?

Adela, during the singing of the minstrel, had taken her seat next the Lady Alicia, leant her head on her shoulder, and, girl-like, had put her hand affectionately into that of her aunt. The eyes of Sir Henry, now directed towards the Lady Alicia, could not but see that she seemed to be more moved and disturbed by the singing of Cædmon, than either the song, or the occasion could in any way warrant. Her countenance altered, and, with great effort, she appeared to suppress some most painful emotion, that it was quite evident was struggling within her breast. At length, on seeing she was ob-

served by Sir Henry, she drew herself up, and assumed at once the lofty demeanour which was so natural to her, and harmonized so well with her accustomed calmness and composure. But to a nice observer, like Sir Henry, it was evident this composure was only assumed ; that the disturbance within was not appeased. She had compelled herself to make this effort, in order that she might not lose her self-command, or be off her guard in moments when the spirit within becomes impatient of restraint, and is ready to show itself in all its force. Even as beneath the cold and calm snows of a Vesuvius, there “rolls a flood of fire,” which can scarcely be prevented boiling up to the surface by the ordinary course of nature and of things.

In a company composed of the higher orders of society, when the chief person in it (to whom all the rest look up with deference or respect) becomes embarrassed, or ill at ease, however much such a person may desire, by a more than usual exercise of courtesy, that the circumstance should

be passed over unheeded and unfelt, yet it seldom, if ever, fails to throw a chill and a feeling of constraint on all the rest of the party. Even so was it now. The Lady Alicia, uncomfortable in herself, managed, though unwittingly, to make all present feel the same. Everybody, therefore, was glad when the hour of retirement approached. On the morrow my Lord Abbot and Sir Henry de Pomeroy took leave; the latter very ingeniously contriving to borrow a hawk's hood and jessies, before his departure, with a view to have an excuse for calling again soon at the castle, for the purpose of returning them, and of gazing anew on the bright eyes and golden locks of the beautiful and captivating Lady Adcla.

CHAPTER V.

For lovers' eyes more sharply sighted be
Than other men's, and in dear love's delight
See more than any other eyes can see.

SPENSER.

WE do not intend to follow up in detail the means by which, with the assistance of his friend the Lord Abbot, Sir Henry de Pomeroy won for himself such favour at the castle of Wilsworthy, that at length he became a very frequent and distinguished guest within its walls.

In the interval, though the interests of his growing love had the first place in his heart, yet he did not wholly neglect those of the Earl of Mortaigne; indeed, so far from it, that in this also, assisted by the subtle and ambitious Baldwin, he very successfully intrigued for the cause

of the young prince in the west, and meditated, in his own person, the achievement of that exploit which has obtained for him so remarkable a record both in history and tradition, and of which we shall have to speak anon in the progress of our narrative.

But these are matters for future consideration ; at present we must once more accompany Sir Henry to the castle, where, at the time we open this chapter, he was an honoured and a favoured guest. Dearly as the young baron loved Adela ; at the period of our tale, it was so contrary to all laws, moral or divine, that any one of rank should marry without the consent of parent or guardian, that Sir Henry never even thought of a clandestine marriage with the beautiful young heiress as a thing within the verge of possibility. The regard of the Lady Alicia, therefore, became to him an object of the very greatest importance ; as the success of all his hopes must ultimately depend upon her will to favour or not his pretensions for her

ward ; and it was precisely with the Lady Alicia that he found himself most painfully circumstanced, as it was so difficult to decide in what manner he might be considered by her in reference to his suit. Sir Henry de Pomeroy possessed considerable powers of imagination, and somehow or other the Lady Alicia kept them constantly at work. Her fame for singularity, her reputed deep sorrows, her strange and moody life, were not unknown to him ; but the knowledge of these things made him fearful how to act. He knew that to ask her consent to address her ward when he should have openly declared himself for Prince John, might be too late ; yet to ask it too soon would be at once fatal to his hopes. He knew, therefore, that in common prudence, he should feel something like the certainty of approbation, before he took so bold a step ; and yet to find out how the Lady Alicia stood affected towards him, was indeed to search into an enigma.

His hopes; his fears both conspired to make

him a close watcher, a very spy upon her feelings and her actions; so that he stood in the strange and novel position of devoting all his principal thoughts, not to the lady whom he loved, but to her mysterious and reserved aunt, and felt almost as keen an anxiety lest he should fail in winning the good graces of the one, as of the other.

Hitherto, in his intercourse with mankind, the passions of Sir Henry de Pomeroy had been called into play only for the interests of his ambition; and being as bold as well as a brave man, he had seldom met with a difficulty, but, like Alexander and the gordian knot, he had at once decided on cutting it with a single stroke, rather than to unravel it with patience. But very different was it now, when the passionate feelings of his character were called into play by the interest of his affections. He had no longer the decision of a bold man, who dares at once place his hopes on a stake, and throw for the prize. The

fear of losing all he most valued, made him cautious; so that he went on in that inexplicable line of conduct so injurious to the peace even of the strongest mind, suspecting every little circumstance, weighing every trifling act of the Lady Alicia, and supposing a hidden motive lurked beneath all she did or said, in reference to himself; even the frankest avowal of good-will became matter of suspicion with him, and thus did Sir Henry torture his mind with a thousand apprehensions and alarms, simply because he dared not at once ask the consent of the guardian, and satisfy his doubts respecting the niece.

The scenes which now took place at the castle, we feel it will be very difficult to describe to our readers; for how shall we make them clearly understand an intercourse of looks, doubts, intimations, and suspicions? yet in such principally consisted the extraordinary friendship, for so did each call it, which now subsisted between the noble guardian and the knightly

youth. We have given a sketch of Sir Henry's conduct ; we must here present one of hers.

Her professions, as we have intimated, were from the first those of friendship. After a while she became reserved with him ; so reserved that he fancied she was drawing back from his acquaintance ; yet, as Othello says of Brabantio, when the noble Moor first began to cast a loving eye on Desdemona, she “ oft invited him.” In these meetings, she always made Adela a very secondary person, herself taking the lead ; and when she occasionally became reserved, her manner was so imposing that she contrived to throw the chill of ceremony, which led to silence, over all the rest of the party, whilst to the courtesies of society she never failed to pay every attention. Sometimes she would soften into kindness ; and though, on the whole, she kept Sir Henry much at a distance, yet would she, now and then, insensibly as it were, suffer courtesy to glide into social intercourse, almost into affectionate friend-

ship : it was but an *almost*, for whenever she verged towards anything really affectionate in her manner or expressions, she would suddenly draw up, and relapse again into coldness and distance ; a change of manner which was the more painful to Sir Henry, as it was unaccountable, nor could indeed be called to an account, for it was never unguarded ; it never produced that pettish irritability, or want of decorum, by any hasty expression that could be made a subject for explanation or complaint with a friend.

Still Sir Henry would not be discouraged : even when in these moods, he would endeavour by gentle means to win her back to show some kindness to him. But though he perceived that in such moments she was not altogether insensible to his attentions, and that she liked to receive from him a homage to which she had been accustomed from her birth, yet he often felt repulsed and abashed, especially when he conceived her very courtesy was only

exercised towards him as a substitute for a feeling of a more warm and cordial nature.

Thus strange and wayward was the Lady Alicia ; so that, situated as he was in respect to his hopes for her niece, she gave him all the pain that a mistress could have inflicted, without the gleams of sunshine and of love that would have rendered it endurable.

The keenly observant spirit of Sir Henry de Pomeroy soon taught him to know that in this singular woman he had to deal with a character composed of passions so opposite, so strong, yet so overruled, that the very contradictions they produced were, when closely examined, more seeming than real. There was in her manner variation in abundance, but in her conduct her views were uniform, never capricious, and all her actions had a clear and determined aim. It was this aim, in respect to himself, that he now felt so desirous to ascertain, ere he attempted to prefer his suit ; for well did he know that the very pride of a lofty character,

such as she possessed, would not suffer her to change, if she once gave a denial to his suit. His only hope was, he believed, to win on her affections; for in the midst of her hauteur, and occasional fits of coldness, Sir Henry had detected a sensibility the most marked, that would every now and then seem to bid defiance to all the barriers of pride and self-command; and what was more extraordinary than all the rest, there were times when she appeared to be so much aware of this intuitive strength of feeling, that she would seemingly give way to it without an effort at control. At others, when she had occasionally done a harsh thing to one of her attendants, and was really sorry for it, she would not hesitate to indulge in a thousand expressions of the kindest nature; yet, as if she would make a compromise between her pride and her feelings, she would suffer the unkind act to remain unaltered, (in cases where it was capable of being recalled,) whilst she wasted in an effusion of affectionate words the very

energy which, if properly employed, would at once have enabled her to repair her fault.

At length, after a long and most attentive observation of her no less difficult than extraordinary character, Sir Henry came to this conclusion—that she was a woman naturally of the strongest and quickest passions and feelings, but in her general conduct was not so much regulated by them in reference to others as to herself; that there was much of selfishness even in her very virtues; and that she was the victim of some deep and concealed affliction, which was not of a nature to suffer the approach of the world; and so far was she from seeking any sympathy with her sufferings, she would have repelled the slightest approach to it, or even the slightest intimation that any cause existed for her requiring it, as an insult to her pride. In the male sex, Sir Henry fancied such a character as the Lady Alicia possessed, would, had it done a wrong to another, have freely accounted for it with the sword, but never by concession.

With Adela he had a creature of quite another mould to deal with. Beneath that modest and seemingly calm exterior, there lurked a capability of feeling not less strong, but accompanied by a very different disposition from that of her aunt. Deep as were her feelings, Adela was generous as well as impassioned, and thought much less of herself than of others, on all occasions that called them forth. Indeed, such was her modesty, and of so little consequence did she appear in her own eyes, that if a sacrifice were to be made in any matter in which she was concerned, she always conceived she was, of course, the person who ought to make it. With her obedience was scarcely a choice, on a principle of duty it was so natural to her; and any one having authority might, were they so disposed, exercise it over her in the most arbitrary manner, without even a fear of opposition from the most gentle and passive of her sex.

Though Sir Henry de Pomeroy never failed

to remember the warning of the Palmer, yet these recollections recurred to his mind with but feeble effects. The strange threatenings of the Palmer were now remembered, in the broad eye of day, and, by a man in love, with a very different feeling to that which they created when they came before him in the midst of silence, darkness, and mystery, from one who was himself mysterious ; so that they now no more affrighted him than would the shadows raised by the wand of the pretended magicians of the time, in the old halls of the castle. At length they seemed to him to be little more than the wanderings of an uneasy dream ; whilst the doubts he entertained respecting the consent of the Lady Alicia were more real, and so much engrossed his mind, that he could not admit any fears of a merely imaginative nature.

But though love had made Sir Henry, who was naturally of a sudden and headstrong character, cautious in reference to the object of his choice ; though it had induced him to think slight-

ingly of the Palmer's warning; though it had somewhat cooled his ardour for Prince John's concerns, as it excited his energy in his own, it could not do one thing,—it could not induce him to contend with the passion itself for the sake of its object, till after the approaching eve of St. John, when a promise had been given that all doubts should be cleared.

But to contend with any passion had never formed a part of the character of this impetuous and self-willed youth. How to secure its success was, therefore, the sole end and aim he had in view in reference to his love for Adela; and if he watched with inquisitive eyes the Lady Alicia, with no less anxiety did he watch the most favourable moment for pleading his passion with her lovely niece; till his ardent looks, though furtive and irregular, alarmed a mind so retiring as hers, and she would blush and droop her head, and shrink from such impassioned glances with an excess of modesty that he frequently interpreted into coldness towards him;

a thought which added new torture to a soul already on the rack of apprehension. Then would an expression of sadness overspread every feature of his face, till on observing some word, some little circumstance of kindness on the part of the Lady Adela, hope would revive, and by her cheering influence dispel the gloom.

Yet could he have read the heart of Adela, none of these fears would have found a place within his own ; for he had gained for himself a deep interest in her affections ; yet, though her love for him was tender, it was of the most retiring nature, and had in it that captivation which none but the love of a modest character can possess : a love which occasionally rose into animation, even into a timid and half formed confidence, from its anxious desire to please.

Strong indeed must be the feeling that could induce a being so retiring as Adela, on any occasion, to step out of her natural course, her excessive and shrinking bashfulness, to become active and engaging in the social circle, of which

the beloved object formed a part ; and chiefly with a view, by such a forgetfulness of self, to draw out whatever was most amiable or superior in the being of her regard. So is it ever with the gentler sex ; man, in loving, feels anxious for himself, and is satisfied if he is loved by the creature of his choice ; but woman, more generous, and infinitely more disinterested in all that relates to the affections, delights not merely in being loved herself by the man of her heart, but in making him beloved in the circle of her family and friends.

Yet, dear as Henry was to Adela, though her love for him could animate her mind, raise her drooping spirits, modulate to the sweetest accents the tones of her voice, though it beamed in her eyes and disclosed in a thousand little things the hidden feelings of her heart, yet she had not a thought to cherish such an affection, or to let it grow into hope and expectation, without the full and free consent of her guardian,

to whom she was bound by so many ties. But all these feelings of caution and timidity on the one part, and of duty and modesty on the other, could not have the force to keep love chained ; they could not destroy hope ; they could not for ever hold in bondage the inexplicable power of sympathy, which makes the heart that loves, at length fully understand the bosom that silently responds to its affections.

Had the Lady Alicia been more intimately acquainted with Sir Henry de Pomeroy, she would not long have remained in ignorance as to the real nature of his sentiments towards her ward. Notwithstanding all his caution, his very change of character, of deportment, would have told her the truth ; for he was naturally of a temper almost as haughty as her own ; yet love had so wrought upon him, it had done what was little short of a miracle ; and what perhaps none but love can effect—that of having made a proud mind humbly modest enough to

doubt its own merits, when there was a probability they might be weighed in opposition to its ardent hopes.

Things could not remain for ever thus nicely balanced between the parties; and soon the young people met, as it was natural they should meet under such circumstances, with doubt, fear, and anxiety, but still increasing love on the part of Sir Henry, and on that of the Lady Adela, with a painful consciousness that all was not well with her; with that flutter of the nerves, that embarrassment which, whilst it suppresses much, frequently betrays more; for whenever any strong feeling has once obtained possession of the heart, it is scarcely possible to prevent its declaring itself, more especially where it is not of a selfish nature.

In the company of others, Sir Henry and Adela could, after the first encounter of looks and greetings, support their several parts tolerably well; and with Adela, whose animation was but occasionally called forth, and whose

native modesty kept her frequently silent, the task was not one of difficulty. But it was when left alone, that they felt most the embarrassment of their mutual and hitherto unspoken affection. Then would each, whilst but one thought was in the mind of both, find fifty idle ones for the tongue ; yet were they such as came slowly from it, as hung on the discourse rather than helped it forward ; whilst any toy that lay in her way, her needle, or what not, gave Adela's fingers something to play with, that she might look down upon them, and avoid the impassioned or anxious glances of Sir Henry ; and often, such would be her distress at some word he dropped, at some unbidden sigh which stole from his bosom unawares, she would blush and tremble, and, if possible, escape from an intercourse that was too replete with deep and suppressed emotions to be other than painful in its pleasures, and agitating in its very calm.

At length the feelings of Sir Henry became so intense, he was convinced he could not

much longer support a state of so much doubt and suspense, without the very faculties of his mind being injured, and that he must take steps to decide at once his fate. Still he delayed, still he feared and hesitated; till one day, surprised by an occasion that fortune rather than his own endeavours had made propitious to his suit, he found himself alone with Adela, at the side of a small fountain that was situated in the midst of the park.

The place, the hour, for it was towards the close of day, the blushing embarrassment of the gentle girl, all were favourable to the interests of that passion which filled his soul; and without premeditation, without even a pause to consider the consequences that might be the result, and almost without a purpose beyond that of speaking the overflowings of a heart whose feelings could no longer be suppressed, did he declare how deeply, how sincerely he had loved. Whilst she, distressed in mind, shaken in every nerve by the suddenness of the avowal, and too much

overcome by her own emotions to struggle against them, in a moment of such surprise, could no longer conceal that he too was beloved with a tenderness and sincerity no less than his own.

That hour determined their future fate, and as Adela had not scrupled, after this explanation of their mutual feelings, to declare all the rest, she very frankly told him that nothing could be done for them, that the result of their affection would be to feel its hopelessness, and to part, unless Sir Henry could devise some plan to win the approbation of her kinswoman; a thing by no means to be rashly or hastily attempted, for, as far as she could judge, the Lady Alicia had determined on compelling her to take the veil.

It may well be supposed, this conversation had the most serious effects on the mind of Sir Henry de Pomeroy; and before he decided as to how he should proceed, in regard to the Lady Alicia, whose character and demeanour appeared so extraordinary, he resolved to endeavour to

learn something more accurate than he already knew, about the past history of her early life, and for such purpose, he speedily adopted the means of which we shall have to speak in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

The excuse that thou dost make in this delay,
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse ;
Is thy news good or bad ? Answer to that,
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN situations of doubt, when a danger is at hand that must be fatal to their hopes, men often resort to means to assist them in their efforts to avoid it, that in calmer moments they would reject, as utterly unworthy and altogether to be despised. Even so was it now with Sir Henry ; he feared the Lady Alicia would be resolutely opposed to his hopes ; and fancied, if it were possible he could but obtain some knowledge of those painful circumstances that seemed

to have wrought so strangely on her character, it would in all probability most materially assist him in knowing how to act for the best on the present occasion, and might, at least, prevent his doing or saying anything that would be likely to irritate or prejudice her already disturbed mind.

On mature consideration, therefore, it occurred to him, that the nurse who had brought up the Lady Alicia from a child, and had lived with her the greater part of her life, could not but know something of those extraordinary circumstances, with which the world at large was but imperfectly acquainted; for, though all knew there was a great deal that was mysterious about the Lady Alicia, no one pretended to speak excepting on the authority of vague, impertinent, or improbable conjectures, as to its cause.

Sir Henry had also observed that Patch, (whom he deemed to be no more a fool than he chose to be for his own interest in the family,) knowing how much influence this favoured servant had

with her mistress, paid his court to her with sedulous attention. It was with Patch, therefore, that the young knight condescended to hold a conference. Bribed by a largess, (with the promise of a still more considerable recompence did he succeed in the service required at his hands,) the fool willingly received from Sir Henry all the necessary instructions, as to how he was to proceed with Nurse Cicely, to gain from her whatever information he could obtain respecting the history of her lady. Patch's curiosity was not a little raised on his own account, and having soon after made an occasion, that led to his being invited to sip a cup of wine in Nurse Cicely's apartment, he very gladly availed himself of it to carry forward the purpose he had in view.

"A good morrow, to you, worthy dame," said the fool; "fine weather this for the hay harvest: the rain, last night, came down as fresh and as soft as the tears of a young maiden, or of such a tender-hearted woman as you, Nurse

Cicely. It will make the young grass spring up with a plenty that will rejoice the heart both of man and beast. For the farmers will have a good crop, and the cattle a belly full, at a low rate. Times to rejoice in these, dame; the very birds seem to understand it is so, by their chirping and singing, as merrily as if St. Kewen was praying for the laying of their eggs."

"Good lack!" said the nurse; "and what did he pray for? Swans' eggs, I trow, a rare dainty."

"No, good dame," replied the fool; "St. Kewen was an Irish saint, and favoured the laying of eggs in a very different manner; for one day, when he was praying, holding out his hands at the window of an upper chamber, a pretty little swallow came and laid an egg in one of them; and such was the patience of the good saint, that he never stirred from his position, till the pretty bird had built her nest, laid all her eggs, and reared her little family of flutterers.

And no doubt, nurse, a person so wise as yourself must know, that saints who favour birds are the especial protectors of noble persons. Our Lady Alicia, for instance, is said to be protected by St. Colombe and his dove — I dare say you remember to have heard, how the doves flew about at the hour of her birth. No doubt you know, likewise, all about her wedding and her troubles, and her crosses, for such a discreet woman as you are must have been very much trusted.”

“ Why, yes to be sure I was,” replied Cicely ; “ and as to remembering my Lady Alicia’s birth, alack ! I shall never forget it. It fell, of all days in the year, on the eve of the assumption of our Lady. I was then a young thing, and a comely, and as merry as May ; and had for my bachelor, Walter the baker, that was Walter the baker of our household ; for I lived with my Lady Alicia’s father and mother ; and noble Normans were they, seeing that my Lord came over with Duke William, and fought in the

battle of Hastings, and had lands given him, and his name written down in the Battle Abbey roll, and moreover—”

“ I understand,” said Patch, anxious to cut short this long story, “ you lived with them, and according to the Norman custom, you became milk-mother to my Lady Alicia.”

“ Milk-mother to my Lady Alicia, and I never married in all my life ! What may you mean by saying such a thing as that, Master Patch ? You do not mean, I hope, to refer any scandal to my innocence,” said Dame Cicely, fanning herself violently. “ My innocence,” she continued, “ I would have you to know, was never yet suspected by man, woman, or child. In my young days, all your sex were afraid to come near me. I was, as I may say, a very tigress in keeping up my own consequence, and that all the varlets knew ; and so they kept their distance.”

Patch, alarmed lest he should have unwittingly offended, apologised, saying he had forgotten she

had never been married ; and, no wonder, for he could scarcely believe how so comely and discreet a person should have remained single till now.

“ I must say it was my own fault,” replied Cicely ; “ and you are not the first man, Master Patch, who has wondered on seeing me, that I kept single to this time of life ; not that I mean to say that it’s a time of life out of the usual way. There are many older than I, in the world, that have not laid aside all thoughts of changing their single state, I warrant.”

“ And why should you do so, dame ?—you who are so likely a person, and so well to do in the world ?” said Patch, in a tone of earnest compliment, very like advice from a friend, which happening to chime in with the humour of the advised, is sure to be well taken. “ Why should not you think of a change, some time or other ; I see nothing against it.”

“ Nor I neither, Master Patch,” replied Cicely, completely led back to her good humour ; “ only that nobody has very lately seemed to think

about me ; and that's some obstacle, to one of our sect. Women can't speak out their minds without blushing, on such matters, unless to a particular friend, and to such a sensible man as you are, though you are a fool, Master Patch ; ” and Dame Cicely fanned herself very gently, and looked very lovingly as she spoke.

“ Oh ! no fear of your blushing to me, dame,” said Patch ; “ there's no occasion for it.”

“ I'm glad to hear you say so,” replied she ; “ and as you are such an honest and such a sensible youth, and so much my friend, I may tell you what I have saved in my service, by the bounty of my lady, who is a very free giver. I am worth twenty marks in gold ; one hundred and ten shillings ; one hundred and seventy esterlings ; and two hundred and forty pennies that make up the Tower weight, five bezants and nineteen zantines ; twelve pieces of household stuff, seven kirtles, and odd furniture both for body and house. And that of my money, some is in real coin, that was paid by the tale ; some

to be valued *ad scalum*, as the Jews are most like to value it; others by *increment*, — you see I have the names and ways of increase and money matters at my tongue's end; others again must be taken *ad pensum*, and I may say that, take the whole, it would bear the trial of *combustion*; and that me and mine would make a *fusor* worthy the king's exchequer."

Patch was perfectly astonished, dumb even, before this recital of Dame Cicely's wealth, and began to doubt whether the old nurse was not about to take up the Jew's trade of usurer, so ready was she in every mode and manner of reckoning, valuing, and proving the coin of the realm. Still, what could all this mean by being addressed to him? He gave a shrewd guess when she added, looking very tenderly upon him,

"Walter the baker could do nothing with me, though he followed my heels as constantly as his own dog did his basket of loaves, for many a long year. But Walter was not such a proper

man, as you are, Master Patch ; he had not half your sense, though you are a fool. But I have it here," she added, laying her finger on her forehead ; " there is some judgment in my experience ; I know how to distinguish, how to choose a man ; and though there be a score or two of years difference between us, why, it is not much matter, as long as there's a fancy. And, as you say, I'm a comely body ; and, as I say, with twenty marks in gold, and a hundred and ten shillings, and a hundred and seventy esterlings, and—"

Patch, perfectly alarmed by this sudden and violent attack upon him, cut short Dame Cicely's enumeration of her wealth, which, with all her personal pretensions and simple cunning, she had sense enough to know was the most captivating charm she possessed, when endeavouring to win a man, who in point of years was young enough to be her grandson, instead of her husband. At length the fool said very civilly,

" Most excellent and respected Dame Cicely,

with all thanks for your good will, I must tell you, though I am a fool, I am not yet fool enough, nor knave enough either, to bestow my folly, at the suggestion of my roguery, upon such a wise, staid, and worthy person as yourself. And, trust me, dame, don't tell every fool you meet how much you are worth ; for, may be, all would not take wit enough in their folly to be honest men, and let it pass free. For, trust me, good Cicely, there are more men in the world that have a thumb to put into their neighbour's sack, than the miller, who has become a proverb for taking toll for his own dish. I honour you, as I would my mother, or my grandmother ; I don't say you are old enough for both, but good enough for either ; and so, most discreet Cicely, we will be excellent friends, but think no more of billing and cooing like a couple of doves in the cot. Let us rather talk of old times, and of thy mistress, the Lady Alicia ;" and then, with a little more cunning flattery and persuasion, Patch brought her round to the mood he

most desired. "Thou didst speak of her birth just now," added the fool.

"Ay, marry did I," said Cicely; "well do I remember the day she was born: why, I had the babe in my arms ere it was an hour old, and as fine a child it was as ever was seen. I was called to my lady by Margery, the bower-woman; it was on the eve of the Assumption; and a great company were we to have in honour of the day at the castle. And I was busied among the maids, seeing all things put in right order, and giving out the sweetmeats for the cooks, by reason that old Rebecca, who had charge of them, was sick, and I helped Rebecca, for she and I were bedfellows, and had our pittance together, and —"

"You were nurse to my Lady Alicia as soon as she was born," said Patch, anxious, if he could, to get over the particulars of the birth of the child, which he had heard fifty times before; "and you lived with her ever after."

"Ay," said Cicely; "I was the child's nurse from

the birth. But, as I was saying, I was busied among the maidens, weighing out the sweatmeats and the comfits, and giving fifty orders to the one and to the other all at the same time ; as, how the gold comfit-box was to be sure to stand before my lord ; and how, when the cooks handed round the capons on the little spits, the Norman way, to the company, they were to be sure to hand them first to my Lord Abbot,—Abbot Stephen that was then,—that he might have the first slice ; for Stephen,—our Lady rest his soul, good man,—would as soon have none at all, as not have his own cut of the capon's breast ; and right and proper was it, for churchmen should go afore other men, even great barons, in all matters of respect."

" But the babe," said Patch, " what of her all this while ?"

" Why, as I said, I had her in my arms before she was an hour old ; a finer child never came into this world of sorrow and of care," replied Cicely ; " the very picture of its father ; it had its father's

pout with the lip, pretty dear ; ay, 'twas as like as one pea is to another ; and it cried lustily as soon as it was born ; and it did my heart good to hear it, for I knew it was lucky. And though its father seemed vexed, when he heard that his lady had brought him a little maid, for he would have had a man child ; for he wanted an heir male to his lands ; yet, he said, he would not murmur at God's sending, and so, giving me a bezant, for bringing him the news, he bade me go my ways, and send to him Master Simon, who was *star-wise*, and our family conjuror, for all great barons in those days kept an astrologer in their household. Our lord and chief was earnest to know what would be the fortunes of the new-born babe."

"And did Master Simon, the astrologer, predict any of those sad chances that have happened to our Lady Alicia?" said Patch ; endeavouring by so leading a question to make the old nurse fancy he knew much more than

he really did; hoping it would induce her to talk the more freely about the matter. Nurse Cicely, however, needed no additional stimulus for gossiping; in that respect she somewhat resembled a child's toy that needs but a little exciting at the first to put it in motion, and when once fairly set going, will run on till it has quite spent itself in whirling. She thus continued: "Why, I can't say, Master Patch, that ever my lord told me exactly what the astrologer said would be the fortunes of my lady; though I am certain he predicted something—and so I used to think when all those terrible matters came to pass."

"Ay, I thought as much," said Patch; "such things as they were, you know, Dame Cicely, never could have happened without being foretold."

"To be sure, I thought so, and said so," replied the nurse; "for, says I, there's nothing comes to pass without the stars; and so, though

I knew nothing of what had been foretold, I considered it as all fulfilled when my poor lady became such a sufferer."

"My life upon it, you were in the right, dame," said Patch; "she could not have met with those singular sufferings and events, you know, without the assistance of astrology."

"Nor could she have met with her husband neither," said the nurse.

"Certainly not," answered Patch.

"And such a husband, too!" exclaimed Cicely; "such a comely, noble, handsome man, as was the Lord de Beaumont,—very wild, though, in some of his ways; and folk did say he went up to London town and followed the court, and neglected my poor lady, and left her here in the castle all alone by herself; and she loving him as never before woman loved man—it was enough to make her mazed."

"It was so, indeed," said Patch; "but how know you it was true?"

"Why, only because there were those who

said so, and said they knew he was false to her, and would swear it upon the four gospels, with relics put under the books of them : nobody dare take such an oath as that, unless it were true."

"I don't know," said Patch ; "the world's very bad, and every day grows worse ; there are few honest men now-a-days but what are counted fools, and that's the reason, I believe, that I am accounted one of them."

"Many people are accounted what they are not," said the nurse. "But, as I was a telling, there were many strange things happened about my lord and my lady, that I could never exactly come at the bottom of. And, somehow or other, my lady mistrusted my curiosity, and fancied I wanted to know more than she chose to tell ; and so she took occasion, as you will hear presently, to send me out of the way, just at the time there was, I believe, most to be known, had I stayed by her."

"No doubt she feared your shrewd wit and

observant eye," said Patch, "if there was any thing to conceal."

"Ay," replied the old dame, "and that there was something to conceal, nobody shall ever persuade me to the contrary, though I can't exactly guess what it was. But I am sure there was a something; but all I knew was this—"

Patch perked up his ears, listened with the most fixed attention, and prepared to have his curiosity most fully satisfied, when the nurse abruptly said, "What time of the day may it be, think you, Master Patch? for sure 'tis time for me to go wait upon my lady."

"Not so, good dame," replied Patch; "we will not part till I have finished this cup, and you your pleasant story."

"Well then," continued the nurse, "my Lord de Beaumont came home to the castle at last, and brought a dear friend with him, a very great baron, and he and my lord were what is called brothers in arms; and they loved each other like brothers in blood; and so they lived

together for some months in the castle ; and hunted and hawked, and revelled and tilted, and gave banquets, and nothing was like it. But somehow or other, I soon observed that there was something wrong between my lord and my lady. I could not tell what, for both were very strange ; and the friend went away, and my lord soon after him ; and both were busied in making preparations for the Holy Land. After they were gone, my lady became more strange and moody than ever ; and did not go to mass, nor beyond the domain of the castle ; but often went, as 'twas said, to a cell of mortification she had built for herself in the woods, and there she would let no one go with her : till, at last, I thought she looked so ill, and rested so ill, and seemed always in a fright and a flutter, and never smiled, and was so lost in thinking, that if anybody spoke to her, she often did not seem to hear them. Well, at last, I, who had been her nurse from the cradle, took on me to tell her, how sorry I was to see her in such a way ; and I asked if

anything ailed her that I might know of, and if comfort was not to be had by good counsel. But she treated all I said as nothing but my fancy, and told me she had uneasy thoughts about her lord, who was at that time absent in the Holy Land. And soon after, she told me she was under a vow that would oblige her to travel, as a poor pilgrim, to some of the shrines in Cornwall ; and that she was determined to go, and to take with her only a Norman woman, whom she greatly trusted, as the attendant of her pilgrimage. I was to remain at the castle, have the keys of all the stores, and keep order there till her return."

"And how soon did she come back again?" inquired Patch.

"You shall hear anon," said the nurse ; "she almost, as I may say, stole away from her own castle ; yet we all knew she was under a vow for the sake of my lord's safety in the holy wars, and was visiting all the shrines for him. Well, away she went, and no tidings came of her. I did

my best, and kept the keys, and looked well after the maidens and servitors in her household. At length, we grew uneasy at such a silence, and such an absence, and began to fear something had happened ; when, all at once, my Lady Alicia came home,—I shall never forget how ; it was a thing enough to make one mazed to see it, and to remember it.”

“What do you mean ?” exclaimed Patch in surprise.

“Let me make an end of telling it,” said the nurse ; “she came home attended by a stranger, quite different to what she went out, with only one bower-woman. And as she dashed over the draw-bridge, for she was on horseback, and the bridge had been lowered to let her pass into her own castle, she rode like one who cares not for her own life, or for the neck of the horse. I marvel she was not killed, considering the spirit of the animal she rode, and how she rode him. He reared whilst on the bridge, and I screamed at the sight, for I saw her from a

chamber of the gate-house ; and we all thought that she and the horse would have fallen from the draw-bridge into the moat below, and be dashed to pieces before our eyes ; for the moat was then dry, by reason of the drought ; and we all hurried to meet her, and to give her a welcome home in the outer bayle of the castle."

"And then you learnt what had chanced?" said Patch.

"Yes," said Cicely ; "never shall I forget it ! how she looked !—how she spoke ! She was as pale as a corpse, yet there was not a tear in her eye ; but I saw the lids move in a quick, short way ; and her lips, that were marble white, trembled like a quivering leaf. She saw that we were all frightened at her looks, and were afraid to speak. She threw the reins upon the neck of the horse, tossed her arms abroad, as if frantic, and looking upward with a wildness in her eyes that made her seem to be something fearful,—something scarcely like a woman,—clasped her hands together, and exclaimed in a voice

that made all shudder, with its shrill and piercing tones, ‘ Oh ! my people, I return to you a widow ; your lord, my husband, is dead !—dead ! he has fallen in the Holy Land ; and I live to tell it ! He was slain, not in battle, but by —” She could add no more ; she had hitherto made a great effort to keep in her feelings, but they were too strong for her. She would have dropped from the horse had not so many sprang forward to help her. She was carried, senseless, into the castle, and there she lay for two months, sick almost to death, and I tended upon her.”

“ And after her recovery she went to Normandy, did she not ?” inquired Patch.

“ Not immediately,” replied Cicely ; “ she was at first for giving herself up to grief and despair. She dismissed with a largess the person who, it seemed, had met with her on the way when she was returning from her humble pilgrimages, and who, it appeared, was then coming to the castle, to tell her of her lord’s death. She gave herself up to the deepest sadness, took

no pleasure in anything, and saw only godly men ; yet not even then her usual confessor. She would wander for days together in the woods, or go to her cell, and let no one follow her to that retreat. At length, a letter came from Normandy, to say how ill was her brother, the Lord de Marmoutier ; and that he wished her to come over to him. My Lady Alicia immediately quitted England ; her brother died soon after ; and we, her people of this castle, saw no more of her for above sixteen years ; for she made pilgrimages, and stayed in Normandy all that while. We heard, however, that the Baron de Marmoutier had left as his heiress an infant daughter, whose mother had died when she was born. And we heard likewise that our Lady Alicia, by buying the wardship of the king, had become the sole guardian of her deceased brother's orphan, the Lady Adela, with whom she, at last, returned to England."

" Yes," said Patch ; " that happened just after the house-steward had shown his good sense

in appointing me to be wise man, or monitor, commonly called fool, because fools like children speak the truth, to the family ; thinking, no doubt, a pleasant, agreeable, lively person, might help to dispel the megrims, if my lady should happen to bring home any of her old melancholy moods with her from Normandy.”

“ It is all very true,” said the nurse ; “ he took you as family fool, in the hope to divert her ; for though she is not frantic in her fits of grief now, as she used to be when my lord’s death was new to her, yet she is sad enough still ; and a most constant widow she has been, mourning her lord’s death like a bird that has lost its mate. Nobody ever won so much as a smile from her, by way of encouragement, when they wanted to woo her, might he be prince, baron, or knight. Oh ! she is a true one, or there be no truth on earth.”

“ And the Lady Adela ; what think you of her, dame ? ”

“ She is very dutiful to her aunt and guardian ; and I am sure that my Lady Alicia wants to

make a nun of her. And if so, there will be a fine windfall, by way of inheritance, for the religious houses ; for neither of our ladies have any heirs male, and unless one of them should happen to marry — ”

“ Which, by your account, nurse, neither of them is likely to do,” observed Patch.

“ I don’t know that,” said Cicely ; “ I have very lately altered my mind in that particular. Have you never observed some things here of late ? ”

“ Ay, many things ; but what do you mean ? ” said Patch.

“ I have something here,” answered the old nurse, touching significantly her forehead, “ something which seldom fails me. I have wit truly under the bone, wit to see and to judge, and that makes me think my Lady Alicia is mightily changed of late. Do you mark nothing with that fine young knight, Sir Henry de Pomeroy ? ”

“ Nothing but courtesy,” replied Patch.

“ Courtesy ! ” exclaimed the nurse, “ a crota’s

end for such courtesy, say I. Courtesy, forsooth ! marry now, to my thinking, it is love ! ”

“ Love ! ” exclaimed Patch ; “ love ! why the Lady Alicia is more distant to Sir Henry, and at times shuns him more, than she would a stranger. Call you this love ? ”

“ I do,” said the nurse ; “ ’tis the way with us women. We often seem not to affect what we love best. And have you not marked that, within these two or three days, how much she is altered to my young lady ? ”

“ How so ? ” said Patch.

“ Why thus,” answered the nurse ; “ I was coming out of the grange, whither I had been to show Tim the miller, our new bower-maid’s father, our stock of corn, when, who should I see gliding down the green alley but Sir Henry de Pomeroy and my young Lady Adela ; and she was hanging on his arm, with her eyes bent on the ground, whilst his were seemingly fixed on her face, and he was in earnest discourse with her. They did not see me ; and next I saw him

take out a rose, that was in her hair, and he kissed it, and put it in his own bosom. And so, thinking no harm, when I returned to the castle, I told what I had seen to my Lady Alicia, and said what I thought it looked like."

"And what said she?" inquired Patch.

"You should rather say, what *looked* she," replied the nurse; "for, truth to tell, she did not *say* much. But she looked! I shall never forget *how*. She looked for all the world as if she had seen a spectre; or rather as if a viper had suddenly come across her, or stung her. I thought she would have swooned outright, as she said faintly, 'I never suspected such a thing as this; I thought it improbable, impossible!' — 'La! my lady,' says I, 'how great folks may be out, when us simple ones are in the right. But who, my lady, could see such a fine young knight as Sir Henry de Pomeroy, and such a sweet young lady as my Lady Adela, always together, and not suspect them of falling in love? Why, my lady, for them not to do so would be contrary to

nature.' 'Contrary to nature!' said my Lady Alicia, repeating my words, and looking so aghast as she stared at me, as if she did not half understand what I had been saying: and I, seeing her surprise, I said—But, holy Mary protect us! there's her call; she is ringing her hand-bell for me. Do not say a word about what I have told you to anybody; for I am no gossip, and never talk of these things to anybody but to such a friend as you." And so saying, Nurse Cicely left him in all haste, to attend upon her mistress.

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CHAPTER VII.

Oh ! most adored ! oh ! most regretted love !
Oh ! joys that never must again be mine,
And thou, lost hope, farewell ! vainly I rove,
For never shall I reach that land divine,
Nor ever shall thy beams celestial shine
Again upon my sad unheeded way.

MRS. HENRY TIGHE'S *Psyche*.

THE sudden summons, which broke up the colloquy of Nurse Cicely and Patch, came from the Lady Alicia, who directed the former to seek out forthwith the Lady Adela, and tell her that her aunt required her attendance in her private chamber on the instant.

Adela obeyed, and her own consciousness of having done wrong, in allowing the declaration and returning the affection of Sir Henry without her guardian's approval, made her detect at a

glance, on coming into her presence, that she was summoned by the Lady Alicia to receive some admonition respecting the very subject that was uppermost in her thoughts. She trembled, and with some difficulty made her way to a seat that her aunt pointed out to her ; there she sat in profound silence, not daring to look up, to meet her guardian's eye ; but hung down her head, and played with the end of one of the long plaits of her hair, that fell in front over her bosom.

The scene which followed was extraordinary ; for, though obedient, submissive, gentle even to timidity, and of the humblest spirit, Adela loved Henry ; and, notwithstanding her deep convictions of duty, she was too young to be wholly insensible to the charm which, more or less, will ever attach itself to forbidden love. The very tyranny of those circumstances by which it may be thwarted, stimulates its energies, and the more it is opposed, the greater will seem the value of the object for which it contends. Hence

is it that love indulged sometimes grows cold, but love opposed retains all its fervour.

But, though alarmed, and almost confounded, by a summons so unexpected, whilst agitated by that secret conviction, which acts like a presentiment for good or evil in a heart so alive to its dearest interests, there was, nevertheless, such a character of ingenuousness, of simplicity, in Adela, that no circumstance could conquer her natural disposition to speak frankly the feelings of her heart. It was not, therefore, how to avoid the avowal of the truth, but how to speak it so as least to offend her guardian, that now occupied her thoughts. In every other respect she was too guileless to think at all about the manner of acknowledging her affections ; she only felt timid, ashamed, as all very young persons do, as if they had done wrong in loving at all ; whilst to make the acknowledgment before one who, calm from want of sympathy, might listen to it with indifference, appeared to her as something fearful.

To add to her embarrassment at this moment, it struck her, as her eye glanced on her guardian, that there was something very remarkable in her countenance and demeanour. The Lady Alicia sat with her arms resting on those of her chair; her person, always majestic, was now raised; and the most perfect self-possession and composure was apparent in the air and manner with which she spoke but a few words, as Adela took her seat. Yet there was a something; Adela could not exactly have defined in what it consisted, which convinced her that all this was the result of a strong resolution, taken up on a high ground, with a determination not to flinch from its object, though it was one likely to be of painful interest to both.

“Adela,” the Lady Alicia commenced, and then made that short pause which becomes emphatic when a conversation of moment is about to ensue; “Adela,” she repeated, “it has been communicated to me,—it matters not by whom,—that you have allowed an approach to an intimacy,

the object of which cannot be mistaken, on the part of Sir Henry de Pomeroy, without my sanction ; certainly without my suspicion. I ask you if this is true ? ”

Adela burst into tears ; she could not utter one word in reply, but continued to weep and to wipe her eyes with the end of her veil.

“ You do not deny it then,” said the Lady Alicia ; “ for I cannot but interpret this silence as an admission that I have been told the truth. You are not aware of the vortex of misery into which you would plunge, did you meditate a union with Sir Henry de Pomeroy. But it is my duty to save you from it, and that duty I shall perform, whatever it may cost me. I had other and higher views for you, Adela, and not even your own folly shall disappoint them. I expect you to perform your duty towards me : I therefore demand a promise from you, that you will see Sir Henry no more,—think of him no more,—love him no more.”

“ Oh, my dear and honoured guardian,” ex-

claimed Adela, "think what it is you ask of me! Could I obey you, you should not need to repeat your commands. See him no more! Alas! wherefore? He is good and noble; even you have spoken his praises as warmly as he deserves. See him no more!—yet even that I might do,—but to think of him no more, love him no more, that I could never, never do—since, I fear,—I"—she sobbed so much she could not continue speaking.

"This is but the weakness of a girl's love" said the Lady Alicia. "It will give place to time and discipline. I shall send you away from Wilsworthy; absence and good counsel will do all that is required; and in a few months, nay, in a few weeks, you will think no more of this foolish affection. It will yield to time."

"Yield to time!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Adela; "oh, my guardian, can a virtuous affection pass away so soon, and be as if it had never been? Time may change many things, but it will never change my heart. I thought the good never altered

when they loved those who were good ; I thought that all just affections were enduring ; and that to change was disgraceful, the first step to dishonour."

Adela's voice faltered with emotion ; she looked up,—her eyes met those of her aunt,—a strange sympathy seemed to be awakened by this encounter of looks. Each seemed to read the mind of the other ; both became confused. The words which hung on the lips of Adela, to finish what she had begun to speak, died away in accents too low to meet the ear ; and Lady Alicia answered only by her eloquent looks, and disordered gestures. The moment was a crisis ; she became white as monumental marble, trembled, breathed a short breath or two, then made an effort to speak, but no word followed ; as if the blood which had forsaken her cheeks, had been driven back upon the heart by the sudden impulse of fear : again, however, it rushed in a full tide from its retreat, and overspread her face and neck with deep blushes ; whilst maintaining a spirit too lofty to tolerate the idea

that anything Adela had uttered should even seem to give a sudden pang to her bosom in reference to herself, she glanced her eye proudly upon her niece, and said, "Foolish girl! the sight of your distress shakes even my firmness; but it must not be. I will neither yield to pity, nor to remonstrance. You must give up this folly; conquer this foolish affection."

Deeply as Adela was interested for herself at this moment, the singular appearance and demeanour of the Lady Alicia, awoke, even in her young and inexperienced mind, a train of thought in which she had never before indulged. Long as she had lived with her guardian, and much as she knew of her eccentric character and habits, the idea had never before struck her, and it now rushed upon her mind so confusedly that it surprised and almost overpowered her. Could all the sufferings, the eccentricity, the strange mode of life, the faults, the very virtues of her guardian, could they be the result of secret sin—of deep and undying remorse?

The suspicion was an extraordinary one for a girl, so young, so innocent, to admit; but, if true or false, it rushed upon her in a manner that was to herself almost unaccountable. She was aware that nothing could be more obvious to those who lived with the Lady Alicia, and indeed it was generally known, that she was a most unhappy woman; in this respect there was no discovery to be made: but the cause of that unhappiness was a very different thing, and a young and artless mind, such as Adela possessed, unaccustomed to the world, and the petty motives which will sometimes excite the deepest passions, was more likely to be struck at once with the sight of the genuine emotions of an alarmed conscience, than would be one who is more versed in observing the complicated artifices of the world. Again, did she ask herself the question, could any such alarm of conscience be the cause of what she had just seen in her aunt.

These thoughts, however, were but momentary, they speedily passed away. Yet so far was

she from feeling discouraged, that the newly awakened impulse gave her a painful interest in the conversation that followed, independent of herself, such as she had never before experienced. And this feeling called up in Adela a degree of courage that will sometimes be found to assert itself in timid characters, when raised above their ordinary impressions by the influence of the circumstances in which they are engaged.

She, therefore, with an earnestness that surprised even herself, pleaded boldly before her guardian, in behalf of Sir Henry, his high birth, his honourable distinctions, his affections, and asked on what grounds, as her guardian, she could object to her receiving his suit.

Lady Alicia paused for a few moments to recover herself, and then stated some general objections, but none to the purpose; none such as Adela could consider at all satisfactory or conclusive. She still, therefore, entreated her kinswoman to state more specifically her reasons

for insisting on the dismissal of so noble a suitor. Such a persistence on the part of the usually timid Adela, and her aunt's unsatisfactory replies, at length became so painful, that their further conversation was embarrassing to each. In this dispute, however, Adela possessed that advantage which could not fail to make itself felt, of having told her secret in a plain though bashful manner—she had nothing to hide ; and, as her object was direct and avowed, her language was ready and simple ; till, roused into further contest, it soon became emphatic from the sincerity of those feelings that gave her courage to maintain her cause.

With Lady Alicia it was quite different. She had not been open at all ; she had kept something in reserve ; so that she could not support her part in the conference with equal readiness and ease. She frequently contradicted herself, and often marred what she would say, by the very fear she might say too little or too much. At length the pertinacity of Adela compelled her to adopt another line of conduct ;

and seeing she would not be satisfied without some reason stronger than those already given, she told her plainly she had objections to Sir Henry de Pomeroy that were insurmountable, though of a nature she could not wish to communicate to her niece. Adela must consequently be satisfied with her assurance that they were so.

Thus driven, the unhappy girl had no resource but to appeal to her aunt's compassion, that she might not be compelled to renounce a hope, on which she avowed all her future happiness must depend, whilst the reason for compelling that renunciation was withheld from her knowledge.

For a moment Lady Alicia seemed to fluctuate between an intention to withdraw and leave her niece to herself, or to remain and speak to her more openly than she had hitherto done. She adopted the last resolution; yet not without an effort. She rose, took two or three turns about the room, gave a piercing glance at Adela, as if she would read her inmost thoughts, and then placing her hand on her brow, stopped, closed

her eyes, and for a moment appeared to be absorbed in the intensity of her own reflections. A shudder seemed to come over her whole frame, as, suddenly starting from her position, she came up to Adela, took her hand, pressed it vehemently, and with a countenance that, as an index to the mind within, bore the fearful characters of impassioned feelings, she thus addressed her :—

“ Oh, urge me not,—do not ask me to speak it,—do not drive me on that rock, or we are both lost. Believe me I speak truth,—believe me that I, who seem to destroy your hopes, would, with life itself, secure your happiness. But oh ! think not of Sir Henry de Pomeroy, or you are undone. Misery, ruin, death, nay, worse than death, would be the consequence of such a union. Think of him no more,—speak of him no more ; he can never be yours. You must never meet again.”

Adela, though at the first overcome by an alarm-

ing sense of surprise, now endeavoured to utter a few words ; but the Lady Alicia would not permit her to speak ; and looking upward with an expression that had in it something appalling, she called on Heaven to witness her resolution that Henry de Pomeroy and Adela de Mar-moutier should never meet again. There was in the manner in which she expressed this resolution an energy of looks, words, and gestures that would not admit dispute. Adela was silenced, but not convinced.

“ It is for your sake that I forbid this unhappily placed affection,” said the Lady Alicia. “ Yes, Adela, I, who now seem to make you wretched, I love you dearer than life. But I would save you from the worst of evils—the pangs of self-reproach—and such would be yours did you disobey my commands. Follow the path of duty, and it will lead to that of peace: wander from it, and you are lost ; in vain would you endeavour to retrace your steps.

Obedience is the law of God ; all things are bound by it in Heaven, or on earth ; obey then, and be happy."

"I have never wilfully disobeyed you," said the weeping Adela ; "but duty hitherto has been an easy task."

"And now that it is opposed to your own heart, it is grievous," said her guardian. "Yet should you now cease to respect my authority, my commands, no after repentance could repair the evil, and too late would your own conscience upbraid you for the act. Think of that."

"I will obey you," said the trembling Adela, "yet you know not at what a price ; you know not the strength of the affections you would kill at a breath,—would I might die with them !"

"Do I not know what it is to suffer by the strength of the affections ?" said the Lady Alicia. "Look on me, Adela ; am I not widowed and heart-broken ? Am I not bereft of every hope ? do I not suffer beyond even the conception of ordinary sufferers ? yet I live."

Adela at this moment reproached herself for the harsh thoughts she had for a moment entertained about the Lady Alicia; who thus concluded her exhortation to the fulfilment of her duty: "Keep thy conscience, Adela, at peace within thy breast, and no ill shall reach thee. All else may be borne, for conscience comes to us as an angel to speak peace; but if we obey not her dictates, she will turn to an avenging spirit. We must wear her olive or feel her sword. I have noble views for you, my dearest Adela: I seek to make you the bride of Heaven. But not now will we speak of this. Go to your chamber, compose your disturbed spirits, and meet me in my oratory, ere I go to rest. Farewell."

So saying, as if fearful to trust her own resolution to continue a conversation of so much interest, she suddenly broke off, retired, and left Adela to her own sad thoughts.

CHAPTER VIII.

My innocence
Shall stand triumphant, and your malice serve
But for a trumpet to proclaim my conquest ;
Nor shall you, though you do the worst fate can,
Triumph over him whom innocence protects.

MASSINGER.

It was in the abbey church of Tavistock that the cellarer, sentenced to undergo ordeal, was to submit himself to the judgment of Heaven in reference to his innocence or guilt in the charge concerning Grace Bolt.

The ordeal in question, a common one with the monasteries in Brother Thomas's day, was not to be carried forward without due solemnity ; the preparations for it in the church had for some time been going on, and the assembly ex-

pected to witness the ceremony was likely to be numerous.

There was a simplicity in the abbey church at this time, which rendered the grandeur of its proportions even yet more imposing ; whilst in the lights and shadows of a building whose pillars were plain but lofty, and whose arches were at once broad, bold, and sweeping, there was a solemnity of character well suited to the feelings of the devout. The abbey church was also very ancient, and of gothic buildings, as of trees, it has become a common observation, that, unlike most other things, they improve with time, and increase in interest as they grow in years.

In the edifice of which we speak, there was much to admire, and nothing to condemn. The clustering columns, the gorgeously decorated altars, illumined with a thousand tapers burning bright ; the glow of its windows, the coloured light streaming through them on shrines richly jewelled and decorated with the most gorgeous ornaments and

reliquaries ; the capitals of the columns, grotesque in their carvings, often consisting of men, animals, and chimeras, were all of a striking character, and of boundless variety in their execution and design. The sculptures were more particularly so, for Saxon kings, buffoons, princes, knights, and angels, many of the latter playing on the crota or fiddle ; saints in martyrdom, or saints in heaven ; even pigs, (these surrounding St. Anthony in the midst of his temptation,) with every other extravagance, in or out of nature, that the brain of the Saxon architect could devise, by way of embellishment, were to be seen in this church. Indeed, so strange had been his fancies, that they seemed as if they could alone have been suggested by the nightmare having disturbed his repose, in order to favour him with visions of the monstrous. Some portions, however, of these early carvings were scriptural. In such the Jewish princes and prophets of old were made to figure as Saxon kings, in chain mail, and Joshua and

David went to battle, bearing the red cross, like knights to a crusade.

Notwithstanding all such absurdities, there was much in the ancient historical carvings to instruct the poor, when the subjects were strictly scriptural. In this way the unlettered and the ignorant could read his Bible, much the same as a Mexican formerly did his history, or his letters of important news, by a series of pictures presenting before him a graphic announcement of whatever was most of import or interest in his concerns. But if there was much to instruct the Saxon laity, there was also much to delude them in these early monkish carvings.

In our abbey, for instance, might be seen representations of purgatory; monsters with gaping mouths, vomiting flames, or swallowing down the souls driven into them, by the pitchforks of a parcel of little devils with red horns, cloven feet, and long whisking tails. In one of the paintings in the church (for, several decorated its walls,) might be noted a monk with his shaven crown,

pulling some poor soul, by main force, out of limbo : this picture was suspended over an altar, in one of the lateral chapels, with an alms-box beneath, by which those who could not read the admonitory inscription above, might receive a hint not to be misunderstood, that all who desired the prayers of the monks to draw their deceased friends out of purgatory, must not grudge their contributions to the church and the poor.

Besides the gothic absurdities already mentioned, there were several others, not a little amusing here to be found. Such as representations of some of the well known characters in the sacred mummeries, or mysteries of the day. Even the Feast of Asses, and of Fools, which was always performed in the church, here found a record.

We have only further to notice the magnificent rood, seen in the centre of the nave, and rising towards the vaulted roof, above every other image cross, or emblem of the Romish faith. The tombs and monuments were also striking. The sculptured figures and characteristic effigies of

saints, abbots, princes, and warriors were, for the most part, carved with such exquisite art, that they seemed to give life and animation to alabaster, brass, or stone. Indeed, all within the building was of interest; and the long aisles, with their diversity of light and shade, having in them that air of mystery so calculated to touch the fancy, and to create feelings of awe, as the eye endeavours to trace distinctly, amid their sacred gloom, many an object which seems to pass before it undefined, were altogether most impressive.

The very rites of an ancient superstition, when performed in such a place, had in them a spell that was potent; and here the terrors of the ordeal rose before the mind invested with all the power of an offended justice, ready to launch its thunders on the head of the offender. Here the worst fears frequently overpowered the imagination of the sufferer, as they seemed to his disordered senses to be the whispers of the unseen spirits that hovered near.

August as were the ceremonials of the ordeal, yet the behaviour of the laity, and even of some of the clergy, when assembled to witness them, was frequently anything but devotional ; more especially at this period, when the too easy rule of a successive number of indolent abbots and priors had suffered the regulations of the godly St. Bennet to fall into as absolute neglect in the Abbey of Tavistock, as Vincentio complains had those

“Strict statutes, and most biting laws,
For terror, not for use.”

which he was so desirous his deputy, the Lord Angelo, should take upon him to enforce, during his supposed absence from Vienna.

That one of the brothers of our abbey should be now under sentence of the ordeal of bread and cheese, was so great a novelty, that all the town and all the country flocked to witness the strange sight. Curiosity was the chief motive, to see if Thomas the cellarer would be able to come out of his trial, on the charge of his supposed unlawful

love for Grace Bolt, as clearly as Joseph had done in holy writ, after he was cast into prison, on a most false and injurious charge.

Our worthy cellarer, as we have already seen, had availed himself, on permission, of my Lord Abbot's own cheese for the matter of the ordeal. Truth to tell, Brother Thomas was much too prudent to choose any such compound from the dairies of Devon, on which to risk the test of his honesty ; famed as those dairies were, and still are, notwithstanding the excellence of their cream, for producing cheeses as dry and as hard as a stone wall.

At an early hour the multitude pressed to the church ; and its long aisles and gorgeous altars presented a scene the most varied and amusing. Whilst the people began to assemble within its walls, the priests were going through some early service, in a manner that partook too much of haste to be devotional ; whilst many of the brothers were busy whispering together, or nodding, or looking about, or hearing the news ; in

short, doing anything but paying attention to the hastily said matins. Novices were seen setting up and lighting great wax-tapers ; banners were unfurling, and an immense piece of tapestry was unrolling, previous to its being suspended from column to column down the centre aisle.

As to the people, there was no end to the motley throng, or the improprieties of their behaviour. It seemed as if they were come to witness some piece of buffoonery, or the freaks of a jongleur, instead of the ceremonies of an ordeal so solemn as the bread and cheese.

Amongst the peasantry assembled, and assembling, were many farmers and yeomen, and bordarii, even plough men, serfs, and villains joined the throng. These talked of their cattle, their oats, corn, and hay, just as they would at a market. And two or three huntsmen came in, with their dogs, leashes in hand, instead of their beads, and their hounds at their heels ; and these latter intruders, when one of the singing boys attempted to turn them out, began barking and

snapping, and opened a matins that startled the old women who occupied their favourite and accustomed station round the pulpit stairs. Some knights and nobly born youths strolled carelessly in, one of them whistling, and bearing, like the rest, his falcon or sparrowhawk on the fist, as the right of nobility ; and those of a lower grade, who wished to ape the manners of the higher orders, and yet dared not violate the laws by carrying a hawk, as a piece of affectation carried on their wrists a *cuckoo*, whose wings had been cut, and so “paraded their fopperies,” even before the very altars of the church ; and so, as old Barclay says, who notices many similar indecorums of this date, in his satirical verses, they had

“Even as great devotion as a gander.”

Many a sot, with blear eyes, and a reeking unwashed face, strolled in from the taverners, to stare stupidly at what was going on ; and some came to show a tawdry coat, and many a licensed

fool to make as much disturbance as his weak head and jangling bells could produce from the cap of folly that surmounted his ears. These leered at the silly girls, and gave them a jest out of a ballad, or an idle tale, or a song of Nell Norris; and there were two or three clerks, learned in the canon as well as in the civil law, who, with eager faces, moving heads, and gabbling tongues, stood wrangling and disputing, and laying down the law of ordeal, each in contradiction to the other; as if the life not only of Thomas the cellarer, but of the whole convent, depended on their settlement of the matter. And then they made such a quibbling about the word *cheese*,—if it ought to be understood to imply a whole cheese, or only a piece of one,—that had the cellarer been destined to take the ordeal after the fashion in which they contended it ought to be taken, it would have puzzled even the saint in whom he most trusted, to get him clear of being choked in the process. And then the softer sex were not a wit less curious than

the more sturdy, in satisfying their fondness for novelty. Great ladies came, attended by their bowerwomer, pages, and bowmen; and the wives of small trademen thronged in, wearing their kirtles of serge and their hose of scarlet, with their feet thrust into wooden-heeled chop-pins that clattered on the pavement as they shuffled along, adding by their movements to the strange and heterogeneous combination of sounds that rang in the ears, as the younger damsels tittered and giggled and stared at everything they saw, and yet with little reverence, even at the very images that were dressed out on purpose for the high ceremonies of the day.

Though there was all this disturbance, the lateral chapels and altars dedicated to the saints were not deserted. Many a silver-haired old man, and many a good old woman, with their beads in their hands, were seen kneeling, sometimes in a company before an image, saying an *Ave Maria* or a *Pater Noster*, in a sort of low humming tone, like bees in a hive.

At length the hour arrived for the high ceremonial of the day ; and the abbot appeared, attended by his chaplains, pages, and the vestiarius : he was attired in the alb, robes, and cope ; the jewelled gloves, and the ring were on his hands ; on his head he wore the small mitre, and bore the crosier himself. As soon as he was robed the bells struck up a peal, and immediately after he entered the church, and the prior and precentors followed their superior, also attired in their robes of state. Baldwin, with a dignified step, advanced up the aisle ; Cædmon, the Saxon, bore his train, and all present threw themselves on their knees, as he passed, not attempting to rise till he was seated in his stall. Soon after the bells ceased, the abbot rose and began the service of the day with the *Deus in adjutorium*, and after the chanting of many psalms, at the commencement of the *Magnificat*, Baldwin put incense into a silver censer, and, the prior and chaplains assisting, proceeded to the high altar, where the bread and cheese was laid out, and,

according to the custom of the time, consecrated for the ordeal.

And now appeared on the stage the chief actor in the scene, upon whom all eyes were turned, being no other than Brother Thomas, the cellarer, dressed in his plain monk's hood and gown. He advanced with a cheerful air, nothing doubtful nor dismayed, supported, like the lion and griffin of a coat of arms, by the stout sub-prior, on the one hand, and the shrewd sacrist on the other. Sir Simon the curate, his accuser, following, supported by a couple of secular priests.

Brother Thomas next proceeded to kneel down before my Lord Abbot, who, whilst the prior held the silver plate with the bread and cheese in his hand, prayed over it to the effect, that if Brother Thomas might be guiltless of the thing laid to his charge, Heaven would make his innocence apparent in the face of all that assembly, of "churchmen and laymen, men, and angels." He then presented to Brother Tho-

was the sacred dish. The cellarer very readily helped himself to a nice looking piece of cheese, and a small portion of wassail bread, newly baked, that it might not be dry and stick in his throat, so as in anywise to interfere with the judgment of Heaven.

But highly as the expectations of all present had been raised, the ceremony they were so anxious to witness was one of very short duration, having, like a ship-launch, most, if not all its interest, in the bustle, the preparation, and the excitement of the day, the animating spectacle of such a body of people collected together, and all under one exhilarating impulse. Yet not quite so rapidly as a noble vessel is launched from her cradle to breast the waters, did the ordeal proceed. Brother Thomas went about it leisurely. He stood right facing my Lord Abbot, near the altar; there he opened a mouth that was none of the smallest, and commenced munching, apparently with considerable relish, the precious morsel, and finally swallowed it down as

smoothly as if it had been no more than pure cream ; and lastly, with a superfluity of courage and generosity, he offered to take even another slice, if Sir Simon, the accuser, and all present were not fully and perfectly satisfied with the innocent kind and degree of his most fatherly, or rather brotherly, love for Grace Bolt. But to this second test he was not to be exposed : Heaven had done its part ; Brother Thomas had been triumphantly carried through his ordeal, for not even a hem or a cough had interrupted the perfect ease with which it was performed ; and being first embraced by the abbot, prior, and sub-prior with most hearty affection, the former presented him to the whole assembly, and with the acquittal of Heaven, gave him the benediction of the church.

Then rose the Latin chant, and the deep and swelling notes of the organ burst upon the ear of the assembled multitude with the finest effect, as the whole building rang with praises and thanksgivings to Him who in so signal a manner

they considered had vouchsafed to show His mercy and truth to a servant of His church. The abbot next gave the general benediction, and the congregation dispersed. Sir Simon, the curate, stole away, completely disappointed and crestfallen, but cherishing a little store of anger, which he intended should meet with the interest of increase, against Brother Thomas, for another and a surer day. The worthy cellarer was accompanied, in a sort of triumph, back to the common hall of the monastery, by the good-humoured and most satisfied monks, and all was joyous commotion both within and without its walls.

Abbot Baldwin alone lingered in the church; he frequently did so after service, to discuss matters of business with the claustral prior. On this day it so chanced that he continued much longer than usual in debate with him and the vestiarius; and, as it was the duty of the abbot to sit, two or three times a week, in the cloisters, to hear the confessions of the monks, who there approached him for the purpose of

disburthening their souls of their secret sins, our abbot was about to take his seat in compliance with this duty before he returned to his own apartment; but, as he was passing down one of the lateral aisles to quit the church, so singular an event occurred, and of so much importance to our history, that we must mention the circumstances at large that brought it to pass, and therefore do we give them a place in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

Dark and unearthly is the scowl
That glares beneath his dusky cowl ;
The flash of that dilating eye
Reveals too much of times gone by.

BYRON.

IN one of the lateral chapels of the abbey church, lighted only by a painted window of such deep hues that the rays which stole through it were insufficient to dispel the gloom that hung around, there stood, above an altar-table, the image of St. Mary Magdalen, plainly attired, and crowned with cypress and yew ; large beads, formed of glass, to represent tears, were seen upon her cheeks ; a human skull was at her feet,

and her altar was likewise decorated with rosemary and bay, and all such evergreens as were held sacred to sorrow, penitence, and death. In this chapel there was, also, a confessional, with a number of hair-shirts, crowns of cypress and thorn, disciplines, palm branches, and tokens, the offerings of a vast variety of penitents who had here distinguished themselves by the severe penances to which they had submitted in expiation of their sins. The chapel was also known by the name of the *Dolorosa*, as well as by that of the Magdalen.

At the foot of the altar, and before this image of penitence, after the multitude had retired from the church, there kneeled, wrapped in a plain and dark volupure, with every outward mark of the deepest humiliation, the Lady Alicia de Beaumont. Her hands were clasped palm to palm, her head raised, and her eyes, dimmed with tears, were fixed on the image of grief and misery that was before her, as she devoutly repeated a part of the ritual more especially

chosen for occasions of penitence and prostration both of body and soul.

While she thus kneeled, the Lady Alicia was disturbed in her devotions by hearing a long and heavy sigh that seemed to be drawn from some bosom that was near her. She looked round, and to her surprise observed, near the gothic screen, (which was covered by a curtain, and separated the small enclosure from the body of the church,) a tall figure, dressed in the habit of a palmer. Seeing that he bore with him his bourbon and a withered branch of palm, she immediately understood that he was come hither, according to his vow, to offer both (a very common custom) at the altar of penitence, on his safe return from the Holy Land.

She could not distinctly see his head, for he wore his cowl so forward, and his gown so close about the lower part of his face, that scarcely was there anything to be seen but a long and silvered beard, and a portion of the cheeks and

mouth. It was the common remark of the time, that there was such an overshadowing and pent-house form in a palmer's cowl, that it was as much calculated to conceal as to protect the head of the wearer.

The lady felt disturbed at his presence, yet wherefore she could scarcely tell; there was nothing remarkable in the sight of such a person, at such a place. But the cause of her disturbance arose from her own thoughts. She had been engaged in that intense contemplation of the past, in that state of feeling which preoccupies, but does not calm the mind, when outward things become visionary, and inward ones alone real. In that painful calling up of the past, which makes us live our years over again only to feel all that has become bitter in their progress,—in such moments, how does the iron enter into the soul of the penitent! Deep, therefore, and tumultuous as had been the emotions of the Lady Alicia, she was naturally and easily disturbed

by the presence of a stranger ; and she trembled in every limb, as she arose to give place to the new-comer at the shrine.

“ Stay, lady,” said the palmer, addressing her ; “ let me not disturb your devotions ; I come but to make my offering : I will straight retire.” So saying, with a reverent air, he placed his bourbon and palm upon the altar-table, knelt before the image, and remained for a few minutes in silent prayer. He then turned again to the Lady Alicia, and said,—“ Go not, lady ; I would speak with you, ere we part. May be, I would ask somewhat of you.”

“ If an alms,” replied the Lady Alicia, “ for the sake of the holy places the poor palmer has traversed sea and land to visit in Syria, take this, pilgrim, and welcome.” She took from an almogier, that hung at her girdle, a piece of coin and offered it to his acceptance.

“ Keep your guerdon, lady,” said the palmer ; “ it is neither silver nor gold that I would ask of you ; but, may be, something more precious,—

as I would hope to find in you a gentle spirit, willing to receive truth and to act upon its dictates. Of such a disposition gold may be the emblem, for though it is the most solid of all metals, yet is it the most ductile: even such is a generous heart."

Astonished at such a preface as this, the Lady Alicia, nevertheless, signified her willingness to hear whatever the palmer might wish to impart; and added, with that reverence which she really felt for one so newly returned from the holiest portion of the globe, "And from you, father, I would crave a blessing, and some tidings of that land which has been so fatal to many a widowed heart in England; where its dearest and its best have perished on those burning and desert sands, or before the walls of their strong cities. You have, perhaps, traversed as far as Jerusalem?"

"Yes," replied the palmer; "I have visited the holy city, and the blessed sepulchre, for whose deliverance every true knight is sworn to

shed the last drop of his blood. Yes, I have wept over that captive Jerusalem, from whose melancholy towers no sound is now heard but the rude clarions of the infidel. I have wandered amid the mountain solitudes of Judea, where all lies under the curse of an offended justice; I have passed cities, like Babylon of old, that now lie fallen and in the dust, where the screaming vulture and the hissing snake, the wild bird of the air and the wild beast of the forest, seek their home; where not a human creature makes his abode; where all is rent and torn asunder, even as an open tomb, as if the last dread trump had rang its peal, and all were risen to the judgment."

"To the judgment!" repeated the Lady Alicia, as if the word had struck upon some chord of deep feeling within her bosom, and called up a sense of unutterable awe.

"Ay, to the judgment," said the palmer, who observed her agitation, in a voice indicating a

degree of emotion little inferior to her own ;
“ does the thought of it shake you ? ”

“ Who may abide it ? ” exclaimed the Lady Alicia, greatly moved.

“ The innocent, the pure in heart,” replied the palmer vehemently.

“ And who are they ? where are they to be found ? ” said the Lady Alicia in increased agitation.

“ Here,” cried the palmer ; “ here, at the foot of the cross ! ” he seized her hand as he spoke, and led her towards the image of it, that stood on the altar-table.

“ Oh ! saints of Heaven ! ” she exclaimed ;
“ and who—who are you—who can thus by a word penetrate the inmost recesses of my soul ? and yet your manner speaks to my heart more than your words. You seem to know, holy man, that I am borne down to the earth by unutterable sufferings—sufferings beyond all human aid.”

“ Give scope to thy penitence, lady,” said

the palmer; "you have need to express it in tears of blood, could your heart shed such drops as you have caused to flow from other bosoms than your own."

At the hearing of these words the Lady Alicia became deadly pale, her lips quivered with emotion, she clasped her hands together, and said in that low, short, and emphatic tone, which shows how eager is the desire to be satisfied,—
"Tell me, who are you? do you know me? do you know aught of my most unhappy life? or is it on the mere general opinion that all who are penitents before this altar must have done injury to some one of their fellow beings, that you now thus address me? Speak, I conjure you, speak!"

"Ay, I will speak," he answered, "though it be but as the echo to thy accusing conscience; Alicia de Beaumont, I will not spare you. We spoke but now of the Holy Land. There was one who died there, who was once dear to you,—have you forgotten the Eve of St. John?"

"You do know me then," she cried in a low

and thrilling voice, that was subdued in its tones by the very agony of her fears. Such a tone was like the whisper of the dying, — it chilled the heart as it met the ear.

“Ay, lady,” said the palmer; “I do know thee; few so well. Thy conscience tells thee that I speak the truth, though I have but hinted at the fatal tale. Shall I bid thee respect a power that is at this moment so potent within thy breast? I need not; yet what I have to impart will touch it to the quick. It will call forth all thy fortitude, all thy resolution, to make thee act as becomes a penitent,—to repair, as far as thou can’st repair, at this the last hour open to thee for reparation, the evil, the misery thou hast wrought.”

“Father of mercy, support me at this hour!” exclaimed the Lady Alicia; “what is it I must do? Thy words are death to me. But if one theme is known to thee, holy palmer, as I think it is, spare me — oh, spare me that reproach.”

“The wounds I give are hurts that heal,” said

the palmer; "I wound but to cure, not to aggravate thy sorrows. It is justice, truth,—not a spirit of revenge,—no feeling that would injure thine, which prompts me to act thus to her who was once the gentlest, the loveliest, and now, alas! the most unhappy of womankind. The call of justice, too, must be heard; justice that long has slumbered, but now has awakened in all her strength. Turn then her wrath aside; obey what she demands, and fear not."

"Speak,—tell me what I am thus solemnly required to do," said the Lady Alicia; "and if—yet once more I conjure you, tell me who are you?—you, who address me in a tone and manner that implies menace as well as accusation? But that there is an authority, like truth, which gives such power to your words, in all you utter, that something whispers to my heart, I must not doubt you, or I had never thus submitted to hold question with one so daring as yourself; so reckless of what I must suffer in these moments."

“It is not my words that shake thee, or that could have the power to touch thee, Lady Alicia de Beaumont,” said the palmer, “did not the heart within that bosom confirm their truth. It is thy conscience that speaks to thee.”

“My conscience !” said the Lady Alicia ; “her pride somewhat roused by these reiterated reproaches.”

“Ay, thy conscience,—the echo of God’s voice,” replied the palmer.

“It is—it is,” exclaimed the Lady Alicia, as clasping her hands together, she fell at the pilgrim’s feet, and added, in accents that spoke her total incapacity to struggle longer with the sudden and powerful emotions to which his words had given birth, “Say on ; I will do all that may be required of me to do right.—“ Yet, but satisfy me in this, how am I thus known to you ? where have you seen me ? ”

“Oh ! ask it not, require it not, lady, at least not now.—How are you thus known to me ? where have I seen you ? Oh ! where angels have

looked on and blessed you, as they watched over your young head ;—for you were young then, lovely and innocent ; not the bird that has left the parent dove, to spread abroad her wing, was more pure or void of thought of ill. Your heart was tender, warm, and true as youth and woman's love could make it. All things good and holy were around you ; and your father's aged honours were upheld and adorned by you. Soon after you were married, to one who loved you as never man loved woman,—with a love more like that which should be paid to saints in heaven, than to a creature of the earth. That fond, confiding husband—his heart beat true to you,—you were all his joy. He felt, but could not speak his feelings ; his eyes alone spoke to yours, as he caught their mild glances, now raised, now settled on the ground. Lady, you were the sweetest bride that Heaven ever looked upon. So sweet you made an Eden around you, in your wedded love. And, like as in an Eden, the great enemy of mankind

looked on and envied : misery followed,—need I tell its tale ?”

“ Speak no more of the past ; no more, unless you would see me fall dead at your feet,” said the Lady Alicia : “ you have riven my heart. I am satisfied ; you know, indeed, the truth. There needs no other evidence. Proceed then to the matter, to which all this is but as the opening of a fearful page. Let me have all it may contain. I am prepared to meet it.”

“ Know it then at a word,” replied the palmer, “ one whom you would most fear to meet, and yet, may be, would most desire to see, still lives. The hour approaches when he will appear before you, even as one who comes armed with a higher authority than that of man, to do right to an injured honour and a blighted name. The hour approaches, but is not yet come.—You tremble, lady ; you are faint. Shall I pause ? shall I go on ? —you cannot bear it.”

“ Speak, speak on,” she said ; “ I have already

borne so much this day, I will not shrink from what may yet remain of bitterness. I can, in part, conjecture to what all this tends.—Holy palmer, you would speak of the Lady Adela de Marmoutier. Have I read your thought ?”

“ You have,” replied the palmer ; “ it is of her that I would speak. She is sought in marriage by Sir Henry de Pomeroy, the gallant son of the late Lord de Pomeroy. Is it not so, lady ?”

This last question was put in a tone that implied some degree of bitter and passionate feeling in the mind of the speaker.

“ I know well,” she replied, “ that Sir Henry de Pomeroy has presumed to entertain an affection for my ward ; but I have forbidden it : on that head there is nothing to fear ; for the Lady Adela cannot wed without my consent ; and *that* will never be given. I shall prevent such a union.”

“ You prevent it !” said the palmer, in a tone of irony ; “ you prevent a woman, young, fair,

and frail, from following the dictates of her own strong and perverse will ! What law, think you, can bind the rebel heart of woman ?—can hold within its confines her wandering will ? or bid her spirit, calm and unruffled, follow in the path of duty, when passion visits it with its tumultuous force,—tears down the barriers of a righteous obligation, and bids it bound forward in its full career of ruin and destruction ? Are you, lady, possessed of such a power to govern the human will at pleasure, that you talk thus confidently of making any law of duty imperative with the Lady Adela, when youth and love are prepared to play the traitors ? ”

“ Adela would not, I am persuaded,” said the Lady Alicia, “ disobey me in this. She knows well the danger, the penalties she must incur for such offence.”

“ The very knowledge of that danger, the very sacrifice she would be called upon to make, would but make her love so much the more eager,” said the palmer. “ Lady, ask me not

how I have learnt it ; but confide in the truth of my assertion :—Sir Henry de Pomeroy, urged on by the vehemence of youthful passion for the Lady Adela, and in despair to obtain her by your consent, has laid a close but sure plan to bear her from you by stealth. Unless you are resolute, no power on earth can prevent her union with Sir Henry.”

“That union would be worse than death,” said the Lady Alicia ; “it would be misery such as my very blood recoils but to think upon. Tell me how this may be prevented : instruct me,—I will delay neither time nor means to thwart it, nor scruple at anything rather than Sir Henry de Pomeroy and Adela de Marmoutier should meet again, as they have hitherto met, in secret affection.—Tell me what to do?”

“Dedicate Adela, as the bride of Heaven,” said the palmer. “But in order to do this with the certainty of its success, *you* must make a sacrifice. Can you,—dare you submit yourself to pain? to pain such as no nice scruples may

spare you. Ask your own heart what it dare do, and then listen to what must be done."

"It were sin, a deep and deadly sin, to suffer this matter to go forward: to prevent the worst evil, I can and dare do much."

"Aye," said the palmer, "but dare you do thus much?—reveal the truth to one whom I shall name, and who can alone prevent a union that would be fatal in itself. You have pride, Lady Alicia—can you humble that?"

"What new sacrifice—what new humiliation must now be required of me, who have already drunk of the cup of mortification, of sorrow, to its last dregs? Is the sacrifice of my life now required?—is that your aim?"

"God gave the spark of life," said the palmer; "man must not put it out. It is not of life that I would speak. My purpose has not an aim so fearful. Listen: it shall be briefly told. Baldwin, that wily abbot who is leagued with the enemies of Richard, he it is who first proposed and has urged on this rash suit of Sir

Henry de Pomeroy to the fair Adela, your unhappy ward. You must confide the truth to Abbot Baldwin. You start and shudder. But remember, the seal of confession is sacred : fear not then to avow to him, as a churchman, the whole truth ; and with him you must contrive the means (he will not be slack to find them) to remove the Lady Adela to some convent of a holy sisterhood of nuns, where she may forthwith enter on the term of her noviciate ; and ere the time arrives that she shall be vowed as a nun, all the danger of a union with Sir Henry de Pomeroy will be overpast. Dare you do this, as the last, the only means for safety ?”

“ I will do it,” replied the Lady Alicia, in a firm voice ; “ but oh ! at what a price ! Not to such a man as Baldwin would I have this matter known. Is there no other way ?”

“ None,” said the palmer. “ Abbot Baldwin and Sir Henry de Pomeroy, by their far-sighted policy, and the success of their deep-laid plans, have all the West at their command. Sir Henry

de Pomeroy you will not meet again till it is too late. It is to Baldwin, therefore, the truth must be made known, and by you, for by no other evidence can it be established: Heaven demands this sacrifice of you, and by you it must be made."

"I will speak to him," said the Lady Alicia, "though to meet death itself would be more welcome than to encounter that proud abbot for such^a purpose. But, oh! not thus can I part from you, holy palmer; from you, who have wrung my very heart with the bitterness of your reproaches. Tell me who you are; do not leave me thus unsatisfied: that broken and sad heart has convinced you, it may not resist the power of truth. Fear not then to trust it. Tell me who you are; and that you will pray for the unhappy penitent who now craves your prayers."

The palmer turned from her, yet not angrily; he seemed as if he were deeply touched by her words. She thus continued to address him:

“Let me but see your face ere you depart ; for as it is, you have come before me like a shadow of the night, that visits the care-worn mind, in the visions of a feverish dream. You have called up fearful recollections : you have named the fatal Eve of St. John ; you have struck the iron deep into my soul ; and yet I know you not. Leave me not thus ; say but a word,—let me but look upon your features ?”

She caught him by the gown, and in the vehemence of her feelings, threw herself on her knees before him. He made an effort to extricate his gown from her grasp ; in doing so his dress was discomposed, and his cowl fell somewhat back. She caught a hasty view of his face, so imperfect, from the sombre light and gloom of the chapel, that the features could not be distinctly seen. Yet, imperfect as it was, there was an expression in the countenance that struck to the heart the Lady Alicia as she thus glanced upon it with an eye of timidity and fear.

The palmer seemed displeased with the manner in which she had so pertinaciously endeavoured to discover who he was. There was a sternness in his eye, a peculiar character in its expression, that conveyed to his pale features and to his haughty brow something terrible, which, combined with the resemblance she fancied in the face of the palmer to one who was at that moment in her thoughts, altogether so shocked, so overpowered her, that, she suddenly rushed from the chapel, she screamed aloud and fell with her face on the pavement at the altar's foot. On coming to herself, she found she had been assisted by Abbot Baldwin and the claustral prior, who had heard her piercing cry, as they were passing near the little chapel in their way to quit the church. They had hastened to the spot, where they found her alone and senseless; and, not doubting but that the severity of some penance had reduced her to such a state, they threw some of the holy water, from the picina

that was at hand, in her face ; the abbot pronouncing a blessing as he did so.

Soon after she came to herself ; she trembled greatly, and as they raised her, ere she could utter a word, the Lady Alicia looked fearfully and hurriedly around, as if her eye sought something, some object of terror that lurked near her in that place. Baldwin and the prior duly attributed this to the confusion resulting from her yet discomposed senses. But they judged wrong ; she was perfectly restored to her recollection ; and seeing that the palmer was gone, she had self-possession sufficient not to betray the cause of her late distress, till she should first ascertain if it might be suspected. She inquired timidly, therefore, if they had seen any one pass out of the church ; to which receiving a negative in reply, she said no more on the subject ; but prayed the Lord Abbot to give her the opportunity, so favourable to her spiritual condition, to make her confession to him, in the chapel of St. Mary the Magdalen,

to whom she had made a considerable offering, and she wished to add to it after her confession, before she returned to Wilsworthy Castle. The abbot signified his consent, and the claustral prior took the hint, and withdrew.

CHAPTER X.

'Tis ever thus
With noble minds, if chance they slide to folly ;
Remorse stings deeper, and relentless conscience
Pours more of gall into the bitter cup
Of their severe repentance.

MASON.

CONVINCED, as fully as the palmer had desired she should be, of the necessity of removing Adela beyond the reach of any of those violent attempts (so common at the period of which we write) that might be made on the part of Sir Henry de Pomeroy, to secure her person, the Lady Alicia did not for a moment do other than resolve on making the painful communication she had been advised to make to the abbot. The difficulty was, how to make it ?

She knew well that in Baldwin she had to deal with a man, though he could occasionally for his own purposes play the courtier, who was in the main of a haughty and repulsive character. She knew also, that in order to obtain his concurrence to break the dreaded marriage, she must reveal to him matters hitherto unknown, that would of necessity expose her to his severest censure, and compel her to adopt a line of conduct, from which even the most worthy feel a shrinking,—to expose to an ungenerous mind the secret faults and errors of a soul that was originally more noble than itself. And the Lady Alicia, notwithstanding all her penitence, endeavoured to soothe the pains of her self-reproach by laying that flattering unction to the heart, with which human frailty is so apt to reconcile itself to all its derelictions from duty; namely, to say to herself, that in her case there were circumstances which would, if known, remove half the censure due to errors such as she had committed; yet, well did she know—

“Fame will not heed
The train of lesser truths ; but drags to day,
And shows the shuddering world, all bare and black, the
deed.”

She was also aware, whatever there might be of a softening, or palliating nature in the offender's own view of the subject, that where the act itself is wrong, it is no easy task to relate in detail those circumstances which led to it, so as to interest an unprejudiced mind in the narration, or to make the offender appear, in the eyes of a third person, in the pitiable and extenuated position in which he seems to stand in his own. Another thing, likewise, added to her embarrassment : the Lady Alicia, though she had always proudly resisted whatever might expose her to receiving the direct censure of the world, had not, as we have seen in her interview with the palmer, a hardened heart ; she was now, therefore, racked by two very opposite emotions, a keen sense of that personal pride which holds the least approach to a familiarity that would trench upon her con-

fidence at a distance, and a desire, nevertheless, so far to maintain an ingenuousness that was natural to her, to avoid playing the hypocrite on this or any other occasion.

The complicated feelings of which we speak had often caused her conduct and her manner to appear eccentric to those with whom she only casually associated, who knew not the hidden springs and motives of her actions, and that she bore within her mind an ever rankling wound. The cause of this sorrow was ever present to her thoughts, and she applied to it, therefore, even the remotest or most casual observation that fell from the lips of another in discourse ; and, by so doing, frequently presented her bosom to meet the shaft which would otherwise have had neither aim nor power to reach her. Such were the daily suspicions of one so keenly susceptible to the value of an earthly fame, that not even her penitence to Heaven, which should have rendered her careless of it, could give her that calm indifference towards the world, that is numbered

among the many blessings attendant on a humble and a contrite state of mind. But hers was rather a tortured than a humbled mind ; for even at this moment she endeavoured to rally her spirits, and on the very eve of self-accusation and of shame she was gathering around her heart those defences of a stubborn resolution, that would render her very confession a proud one,—a confession of general human frailty, rather than of individual guilt ; a confession that should be made in a manner to let the abbot see it was to the priest, and not to the man, she now addressed herself. This was, in fact, the yielding of one proud spirit to another, which mingles a sort of defiance with its very submission. How different from the temper of mind in which she had met the admonitions of the palmer ! But in him she had been touched and subdued by the energy of a lofty spirit, and the unsparing sincerity of an honest purpose : thus proving in herself, that a strenuous and a candid mind can more frequently achieve a

a conquest over the proud heart, than when pride alone opposes itself to pride.

Baldwin, who had long entertained some deep-laid schemes, in which he was desirous to obtain certain advantages from his acquaintance with the Lady Alicia, inwardly rejoiced at what he fancied would be an opportunity to give him a more than ordinary influence over her ; in what way that influence might be established, he could not exactly tell, though, could he have chosen, he would have wished most to influence her by *fear* ; the favourite ruling principle with all selfish and tyrannical persons. He knew, also, that with so proud a spirit, fear was the motive likely to give him the most influence over her mind. Mankind, he knew well, easily shake off the memory of their obligations, but seldom of their fears.

The abbot had said little in reply to the Lady Alicia's request to hear her confession ; indeed, nothing more than to express his readiness

to do his duty as a spiritual person : he then remained silent, wishing her to take the lead in this discourse ; for Baldwin was not ignorant of the advantage which is gained in making the party to be used as a tool, commence with laying himself, or herself, open (so as to become placed within the power of an artful adherent, or a cunning opponent), unsought. Such a line of conduct was like getting the bird to fly into the net, instead of giving it a wound in order to ensnare it.

The Lady Alicia, on the other hand, wished as much as possible to spare her pride the pain of stooping ; she wished something like a strain of encouragement to proceed from the abbot ; but not a word escaped him : his demeanour was cold and thoughtful, his countenance stern, and the genius of subtlety seemed to lurk in the furtive glances of his close and contracted eye.

“ It is not, I believe, unknown to you, holy father abbot,” said the Lady Alicia, “ that my ward, the Lady Adela de Marmoutier, has

been sought in marriage by the young Lord of Berry Pomeroy Castle."

"An honourable person," replied Baldwin; "a knight of approved valour; of an ancient house, and one who is in himself complete in all the qualities of an accomplished gentleman."

"He is all you say, holy father," answered the Lady Alicia; "and yet there are circumstances—I must add, fatal circumstances—which render my consent to such a union impossible. It is on this subject I would confer with you, that I would seek your counsel; for which purpose I would make known to you, under the seal of confession, certain matters connected with my own family, in years now long past away, that must be painful for you to hear, but most painful for me to relate. Though to hear of the errors and the frailties of human nature can never surprise a churchman, more especially one whose devotion to the cloister, to comfort and console the penitent sinner, and by searching into his own heart to learn the weakness and wickedness of man-

kind, has made it a duty to listen : an examination which must show him that most creatures, like himself, are liable to fall, and that all are equally sinful in the sight of Him who is too pure to behold iniquity."

Abbot Baldwin, not at all complimented by the manner in which his penitent prepared him for her confession, by indirectly reminding him how necessary such a duty might be to himself, darted upon her an angry glance. It passed away, however, without the accompaniment of a hasty word, as he recollected that policy required he should not now take offence at anything she said. Yet his brow became clouded, and there was something that indicated an unbending spirit, as he told the Lady Alicia that her wishes should be complied with, and that before he entered further on the subject in question, he would at once receive her confession.

He led the way ; the confessional was within the chapel. It was of richly carved oak, and consisted of four sides, one of which stood against

the wall ; the lattice-work that composed the upper half was covered with black curtains ; the central compartment opened to admit the confessor, who took his seat in a chair placed within ; as the penitent, kneeling on some steps, before a grated partition on the right side, could, without even meeting the eye of the priest, pour into his ear the confession of those sins of which she was desirous to be absolved. Near the confessional stood the altar of St. Magdalen we have already described, and immediately above it arose the painted window, the deep colours, of whose glass rendered the light of day, which it as much intercepted as admitted, of so dusky and gloomy a character, that all within the little chapel was in shade, excepting where the wax tapers set up by penitents burnt before the shrine, and showed the image of the saint and all the melancholy decorations of her altar, by an unpleasing and almost unearthly glare ; a glare which is always the character of an artificial light, when it is in the least mingled with that of day.

It was at this confessional, kneeling, trembling, fearing, yet never shrinking from her task, that in a low, energetic, yet resolute voice and manner, the Lady Alicia poured into the ear of the haughty and subtle Baldwin that confession which astonished even him ; accustomed as he was to have laid bare before him, in that very place, the secret thoughts of the heart, and often to have opened to him, in its most fearful page, that dark volume of human passion, which, to the eye of the common observer, is as a sealed book.

We will not lift the veil of the confessional ; we will not disclose those feelings and events that, told to the church, were, by the religion of the country and the period, held inviolable in their secrecy to all the world beside. We will rather proceed to state what followed the confession.

The duty ended, the Lady Alicia arose from her knees, dropped her veil more than it had been before over her face, crossed her hands on her bosom, bent her head, and stood for some few

minutes silent, as if engaged in thoughts too deep for utterance. She was now perfectly calm ; but not so Abbot Baldwin. He came forth from the confessional an altered man ; cold and haughty as he was by nature, there was disturbance, even marks of strong and deep emotion, in every line of his face.

He turned hastily towards the Lady Alicia ; he prepared to speak to her unceremoniously, with somewhat less of his accustomed deference, for he thought to find her humbled. He was, however, mistaken, and the first glance of his eye told him that he was so, and that her pride was unabated. She had sunk into reserve, as a defence against that approach to familiarity, which is sometimes the immediate consequence of having, by our own lips, unfolded a truth calculated to lessen us in the esteem of another. Her demeanour seemed in unison with her mind at this crisis ; for, as Baldwin paused for a moment, surprised by a character he had hitherto so little understood, she appeared to him, when he recol-

lected the confession he had so lately heard, like one who, having offended deeply, with the pride of a spirit resolved to rest on its own strength for support, stands aloof from all the world, and despises every other stay.

“Lady,” he said, seeing that she remained silent, “lady, the disclosures of this hour have been fearful. But” (and here the abbot ventured to touch on his spiritual authority) “far be it from us to bruise the broken reed, or to quench the smoking flax. Yet we must not give the full absolution of the church till such time as the penances we have enjoined may be completed.”

“All you have commanded, holy father,” said the Lady Alicia, “shall be fulfilled. Where was it that you directed me to perform the last acts of penitence? I have forgotten, in the many shrines you have named, where I must make my prayers and offerings in Cornwall.”

“At the chapel of St. Michael’s in the Mount, on the Eve, to you the most fatal Eve of St. John, must you bow the knee in deep humiliation

and in penance for your sins. On the Eve of St. John many penitents resort to the sacred shrine in the holy mount, for a like purpose ; and thither must you go, before you can receive at my hands the absolution of the church. Respecting the donations to the monasteries and holy places, we will instruct you at leisure."

The Lady Alicia bowed her head, in token of assent to these instructions.

"And now, as touching the Lady Adela," said Baldwin ; "no time must be lost in the disposal of her person. Holy Mary ! how has this hour changed all our views. Well may we exclaim, with Holy Writ, that we know not what a day may bring forth ! Follow my instructions, and all shall be well. I had thought to see the Lady Adela the bride of my noble friend, Sir Henry de Pomeroy ; but now must she be, indeed, the bride of Heaven."

"Yet, would it not be harsh to force her will, holy father ?" said the Lady Alicia. "Might not a temporary retirement, for a short time,

within some obscure cell, be all that need be done by us, to estrange her from him, and so to break all hope of this most unhappy union? True it is, that I have often wished to see Adela an espoused sister of the holy church in a convent of nuns. Yet my heart had failed me when it came to the point of separation from her, unless her own free will had desired such a change. Adela was ever averse to it; and now, alas! her engaged affections would not suffer her to become a willing votress; and to communicate to her the cause of our breaking such affection in its infant bonds, is, and must be impossible; *she* must never know the truth."

"Never," said Baldwin, "unless she were first the espoused of Heaven. The necessity for concealment would then cease."

"She shall never know it from my lips," said the Lady Alicia, with something of her accustomed haughtiness. "I will never give her the knowledge of such facts, as might shake her obedience to myself; or induce the Lady Adela

to adopt a line of conduct that I could not pardon."

Thus spoke the Lady Alicia, forgetful that the cause of this indignation (for a supposed possible offence in her ward, did she know the truth) was one that should have covered her own cheek with the blush of self-reproach; but too often did this most unhappy woman feel anger where she should have felt shame.

"Yet," she added, "I would, as far as it may be possible, leave Adela free to act for herself. I would dedicate her, but I would not bind her to the altar, as if she were a sacrifice to be offered up upon it."

"It is a fearful necessity," said Baldwin: "yet, after the facts you have this day disclosed to me, I can see no other way for safety. In this world, daughter, we must sometimes, if we desire to gain a better, consent to do a seeming wrong, in order to secure a certain right."

"Yet surely," said the Lady Alicia, who had not, like the wily abbot, either the sophistry or

the hypocrisy to make her argue wrong into right, whilst she did that which was evil,—“surely, to force an unwilling votress to make vows at the altar, which her heart refuses to ratify in the sight of Heaven, must be a deadly sin. I will never force vows such as these on the Lady Adela.”

“I will not counsel it,” said the abbot, who was too subtle not to see that if he attempted to drive his point beyond a certain limit, he might lose the possibility of ultimate success in his too great eagerness to secure it. “Hear what I would advise, lady,” he continued: “be secret and be speedy; and till these present difficulties are overpast, place the unfortunate Adela, as a novice, in a sisterhood of holy nuns. Her will cannot then be forced, and in all probability, before the period of her noviciate is expired, the example of those around her, and the sanctity of the place, will have so reconciled her to a life devoted to heavenly things, that she will herself both desire and embrace it.”

“Should she do so,” replied the Lady Alicia, “the most earnest wish of my heart would be fulfilled. I might myself be induced to follow her example.”

“You would do well and wisely,” said the abbot; “and, as you have no other heir than the Lady Adela, who is herself an heiress of great wealth, think how glorious would be the memory you would achieve for yourselves here on earth,—how bright your crown in Heaven, did you, renouncing all the riches and the pomps of this world, dedicate your vast possessions to the church,—yourselves to God. But not now will I urge this matter; I do but mark out to you a course, which a penitent so illustrious as yourself, lady, will need no counsel of mine to follow up and to adopt in due time and place.”

“I will think upon it, holy father,” said the Lady Alicia; “but of Adela, where can I bestow her,—in what convent, for safety?”

“Where she shall never more meet Sir Henry de Pomeroy,” replied the abbot, “the friend to

whom, till this day, I had most desired to see her wedded ! such are the turns of fate ! so sudden, so unexpected ! I will point out to you that honourable retreat, where her mind shall be prepared for a devoted life, and yet its vows be never forced upon her.”

“ Do this,” said the Lady Alicia, “ and I am bound to you for ever. To prove to you, holy father, that I am sincere, I will consent to that measure you have of late so earnestly solicited,—that I would place my Castle of Wilsworthy in your hands, to be principally manned by the vassals of the abbey, and to be made as a fortress of defence in case that civil strife, now so fast gaining ground in England, should extend itself to the West and endanger your own safety. Will this satisfy you ? ”

This was indeed a victory, to gain possession of the Castle of Wilsworthy, to garrison it with his own followers, was a point the subtle Baldwin had long and earnestly laboured to accomplish, but hitherto in vain. His apparent motive had

been to gain a retreat for the security of the aged and persecuted members of the church, whether clergy or laity, in these times of civil strife ; but his real motive was to gain possession of one of the strongest castles of the West, so that he might, whenever needed, place it at the devotion of the Earl of Mortaigne and his rebellious cause. Elated by the prospect, and eager to follow up a multitude of projects to which this new acquisition would give birth, Baldwin hastened to bring the present interview with the Lady Alicia to a close ; and with an energy of manner, such as he seldom displayed, he boldly and decidedly gave her his final counsels for the immediate disposal of her unfortunate ward ; who, from this time, he determined not to lose sight of, till she should become a nun, and have bestowed all her immense possessions, under his own direction, on the convents of the West.

“ Lady,” he said, addressing with much earnestness his penitent, “ I have a sister who is abbess of the nuns at St. Michael’s Mount in Cornwall.

I will recommend to her care the young and beauteous Lady Adela. My sister will be vigilant ; she is rigid as the superior of her house, —rigid, but not unkind. I will write to her and apprise her what to do. Believe me, there are means to work upon the will, and yet no harm done ; such means as a wholesome exercise of discipline, of authority, that can frame the mind of the young to give a willing consent to a holy purpose. Three days hence, under a guard for safety, but with the utmost secrecy, let the Lady Adela commence her journey to the Mount. The utmost caution must be observed, for should Sir Henry de Pomeroy know your intent, be sure of it, he will intercept the men-at-arms who may form her guard, and will, if all other means fail, attempt by force to possess himself of the person of her he considers as his affianced bride. Adela once placed in safety at the Mount, I will warrant all danger is at an end. I know well the temper of my sister ; she would as soon suffer

the degradation of her own power as abbess of the house, as a novice to be torn from her grasp."

"But she will be gentle to Adela," said the Lady Alicia; "no harsh means—"

"Fear not," said the abbot, interrupting her; "and you will yourself have the opportunity to visit her in her noviciate cell. For you are, as I have but now directed, to finish your penitential pilgrimage in the chapel of the Mount, on the Eve of St. John's day. In the interval, effectually to destroy all hope of this most fearful union, Adela must be removed; all depends on secrecy and despatch, those twin spirits of enterprise. Do this, lady, and do it without delay; then fear not, for Heaven will bless a purpose so holy and so just."

The Lady Alicia signified her assent, and bade adieu to Baldwin. Soon after she hastened back to the castle, where she lost not an hour in making those preparations for the removal of her ward which were, in fact, no other than the first

steps towards making the unfortunate Adela a prisoner for life.

Abbot Baldwin, also, quitted the church, and retired to his own apartment, where he immediately set to work, and busied himself in writing with his own hand several letters, all more or less connected with the many and deep-laid schemes he had in view.

The first of these epistles was to Sir Henry de Pomeroy, to endeavour to persuade him to undertake forthwith a mission to the castle of a baron (an adherent of the Earl of Mortaigne) in the north of Devon, so that he might be out of the way till the fair Adela was removed and secured. Secondly, he wrote a long letter to his sister, the abbess, a hard-hearted woman, of a temper as stern and as cold as his own ; giving her such instructions relative to his views with Adela, that were calculated to place her under the most severe, secure, and rigid control.

CHAPTER XI.

Oh, nothing now can please me,
Darkness and solitude, and sighs, and tears,
And all the inseparable train of grief
Attend my steps for ever.

DRYDEN.

Oh, take me in, a fellow-mourner with thee,
I'll number groan for groan, and tear for tear,
And when the fountains of thy eyes are dry,
Mine shall supply the stream, and weep for both.

ROWE.

THE course of our narrative now obliges us to take our reader once more to Wilsworthy Castle, where, in a small turret chamber of one of its old towers, there sat weeping the Lady Adela, as her new bowermaid, Grace Bolt, who had already been won by her sweetness and gentleness dearly to love her young mistress,

was making some necessary preparations for that journey so repugnant to the feelings of both.

Grace, whose kind heart felt more for her lady's distress than for her own, for she was to be the companion of her banishment to St. Michael's Mount, tried all her simple arts at consolation, though, like many comforters of higher degree, she often touched on topics which tended to irritate rather than to soothe the wounds of the sufferer.

"Well now," said Grace, "Holy Mary and all the saints forgive me, I never think of being shut up in a convent, without thinking that I shall be a great deal more wicked there, than ever I had been in the world."

"You should not think so, Grace," said the Lady Adela: "my aunt says it is the only place where I can ever become fit for Heaven; and she adds, that I have been so wrong in thinking about Sir Henry de Pomeroy, without her sanction, that——"

"Away with such reasoning," exclaimed Grace

warmly: "wrong, quotha, for thinking of the tallest, and the finest, and the sweetest young gentleman that eyes ever looked upon on a summer's day! May be, our lady aunt thinks of him too much herself, to let you have peace in your thoughts about him. We are not all blind, I trow, though we must all be dumb on such matters about our superiors. But I do not care a rush, and I will speak. I say it is a wicked place for us, that convent we are going to."

"Wherefore wicked?" said the Lady Adela.

"Because, my lady, we can't thank God for sending us there. And though I am but a poor man's daughter, yet I know a discontented mind, in rich or poor, is often in a way to become more a wicked than a good one; for it begins with being dissatisfied with God's care of us, and what He does for us."

"Then, Grace, we ought not to be discontented."

"Ay, my lady, *ought* is a word oftener and sooner said than acted upon; for we ought to

do many things that we can't do. You ought not to think of Sir Henry after my Lady Alicia forbid it; yet you think of no one else from morning till night, or else I am as far out of the truth, as I am from Heaven. The saints have mercy on us poor sinners!"

"Alas!" sighed Adela, "how can I forget him?"

"Forget him, no, you'll never forget him. You'll never have such another to think upon; sweet young gentleman! And how grand he looks in his armour, though it's enough to frighten one to see how terrible he seems when he has it all on. But as I was a saying, to think of being sent to that dismal old convent in St. Michael's Mount! It is the most dreadful place, they say, in all the world."

"Who told you it was so dreadful?" inquired the Lady Adela.

"Why, my lady, don't I know about St. Michael's Mount, when I used to see fifty pilgrims, or more, on their return from it, more

especially after their great day, the Eve of St. John? When they came back from their journey, they would often stop and talk with father at our mill, in their way to the monastery."

"And did the pilgrims say that they knew anything about the lady who is the abbess of the convent of nuns in that Mount?" asked Adela.

"Ay, my lady, that they did," replied Grace: "they said she was just such another as our Lord Abbot. Baldwin himself in petticoats and veil; and she is his sister; and he made her abbess of the house. And there is a convent of monks that joins that of the nuns at St. Michael's. It's the only good thing in the place; for it must be so dismal for women to see nothing but women. Don't you think so, my lady?"

"Alas, no," answered Adela; "if I must be a prisoner, I had rather never see the face of man more."

"Ay, that's because you are in love, my lady," continued the loquacious Grace, who, as some excuse for her prattling, really fancied she

did her young mistress good by it, as she would say, to hinder her from thinking.

“For you, my lady, there is only one man in all the world, and that is Sir Henry. Well, to be sure, he is worth fifty such as one sees every day. But I, who am not in love,—that is, not in love with any one in particular—and I could not abide Sir Simon, the curate,—I do like a little merriment and laughing with the other sex, when they are young enough to dance with me. Ah me! we shall have no dancing at the convent. It’s cruel to treat us so. And then, they do say,” she added in a lower voice, looking grave, and in a mysterious manner, “they do say, there are things to be seen there!”

“Many things, I have no doubt,” replied Adela, “that will be strange and new to us, and not a little fearful.”

“Fearful!” exclaimed Grace; “I think so; for what, my lady, can be more fearful than a white woman? and they say the Mount has been haunted by one for many a long year;

and that she sits in St. Michael's chair at the top of the old tower, and that all the sea gulls come flapping their wings and screaming about her, as she calls to the winds, and throws locks of her hair into the sea ; and raises the tempest, that wrecks the ships, and roars like so many lions in a forest. Oh ! the pilgrims do tell such things of St. Michael's Mount ! and worse than all these, in one way."

"How worse?" said the Lady Adela.

"Oh ! they say there's a dungeon in the convent, always kept walled up, and that it is never broken open, except it be to take down to it some refractory novice who will not take the veil, or somebody who has done wrong ; and there they leave the condemned person all alone in the dungeon to die, by walling her up alive. And they do say the ghosts of the sisters who have so perished come and scratch upon the wall, every night at twelve o'clock in the morning, and nothing quiets them but the ringing of a passing bell, to bid God rest their souls."

"Your accounts of the Mount are fearful

indeed, Grace ; but I hope the pilgrims may speak more from report than from their own knowledge. I should, seriously speaking, fear hard treatment and the dungeon much more than the supernatural visitants of the place ; though holy Mary forbid, I should doubt that evil spirits are punished by being suffered, as a part of their punishment, to wander again on earth. I know it is my duty to believe this, and I do so. But the neighbourhood of the Mount is really evil, for *Market Jew** is just opposite ; is it not ?—and if all we hear of the wickedness of the Jews, that obdurate people, be sooth, it is enough to bring all kinds of evil spirits to resort near their dwellings.”

Thus spoke the gentle Adela, who, good as she was, was neither more wise, nor less credulous than the generality of persons in her day, and who, therefore, considered the unhappy Jews as devils incarnate, that they were great necromancers, and that among other proofs of their

* *Market Jew*, the ancient name for Merazion in Cornwall ; in the twelfth century it was filled with Jews.

wickedness, was the permission given to foul spirits to gather in numbers round the towns where they dwelt

In this particular, however, Grace Bolt showed more acuteness than her mistress ; for she remarked, she wondered then why the foul spirits did not keep on their own side, and haunt only Market Jew, without troubling themselves to cross the water to visit St. Michael's Mount, where there were two Christian convents, the one of nuns, and the other of monks, always praying against them.

“ But, for my own part,” continued Grace, “ I can't think how we shall get through the days, months, and years there, where we shall have none of our folk coming and going ; no minstrels, no games, no green woods to wander in, and no Patch, the fool, to amuse us ; with nothing but the same sights every day, the same broad piece of sea ; with no birds to listen to but the gulls : the clapper of my poor old father's mill, that went from morning to night, was better than

that. And then such a weary set of people as are the nuns ; and such an abbess ! I shall break my heart, before the year's out, if I go there."

"Then you shall not go there, Grace," said Adela ; "no one shall follow me who goes with a reluctant will. Leave me, girl ; I can find a companion and attendants enough in my own sad thoughts ; I can dispense with you."

The tears rose in the eyes of the Lady Adela, as the picture of her own desolation, among strangers, came before her mind ; and, perhaps, she felt a little angry at the moment that Grace, to whom she had shown so much kindness, should regret so deeply the amusements of the castle, to place them in competition with her love towards so gentle and so condescending a mistress as she had been to her ; for between the young, when brought into close contact by a prospect of suffering, in which both are likely to share, however great may be the distance of rank, a feeling of familiarity will creep in, so that whilst love is increased, awe is lessened, and the obedience

of an inferior becomes changed into a service more like that of friendship than of humble duty. Even so was it at this moment with Grace Bolt and her young lady ; for no sooner did she hear her mistress propose, in a manner that was marked by a little petulant feeling, that she should leave her to her sorrows in the Mount, than the tears rushed into Grace's eyes, and with the privilege of the young with the young, when alone guided by a generous impulse, she threw her arms round the Lady Adela's neck, and vowed she would never leave her, go where she would, as long as she had life to follow.

There was a pause of a few minutes, whilst each gave way to the fulness of her heart, with tears. Grace was the first to break this silence, because her ideas were more cheerful than those of her young mistress, and she fancied, also, she had really something to say that would be of service to her.

“ Now, my dear lady,” she began ; “ now do not think that what I am going to say is on my

own account; for, indeed, I can quit the castle and all the world besides to follow you; for as to Patch the fool, though he is very civil to me, and I won't say but I have had thoughts there was something in his not dancing with Ethelinda, when he knew I did not like her, yet there is nothing serious yet about him; and there are fifty bachelors, as good as Patch, to be had any day, I will warrant me: so it is not for the sake of staying for his sake that I'm about to say what I am going to say; but, in truth, my dear young lady, only for your own sweet sake, and not liking to see true love crossed, which my heart never could abide, when there was a way to help it."

Anxious to come at the matter, Adela begged Grace to tell her to what all this tended, as her affection and fidelity were points she had never doubted. But she could not see what plan could be of any avail, in opposition to her aunt's determination to send her to the convent at St. Michael's Mount.

“Why thus it is, my lady,” said the Abigail, who, though she lived in the twelfth century, was no less ready witted than some of the nineteenth, in matters that require a little dexterity and management for their mistresses. “I have a plan, as you shall hear ; but first let me say, that I do think all this coil about the true loves of Sir Henry de Pomeroy and yourself, without giving any one reason for it, as I can make out, proceeds from nothing but the Lady Alicia being in love with him herself.”

“I cannot think it, Grace,” said the Lady Adela. “You know how melancholy, how strict are the habits of my aunt, how severe her notions of what is due to her self-esteem ; and that Sir Henry de Pomeroy is young enough to be her son. She would never, for a moment, entertain a thought of such a folly.”

“The more the folly, the greater the love,” (for, like all the maids of young ladies, Grace Bolt had some knowledge of matters appertaining to the court of love,) “I tell you, my dear young

lady; for I have seen it, even when I lived at the mill, among our town's folk and neighbours. I tell you, let a woman once be well in love, and she will see no reasons against it, but all for it. If my Lady Alicia's way of life is severe, she will think she ought to have something to soften it, and she will find *that* in loving Sir Henry. If melancholy, she will say she ought to have a cause for that, too, and will find it in her love for Sir Henry. If her esteem for herself be the question, she will think the better of herself, for loving so proper a man. And if she recollect that he is young and she old, she will say, love sees with its own eyes; and, therefore, shall Sir Henry's youth become a good match for her years; and Fancy, she will say, never asks about the year of anybody's birth, but its own. Trust me, my lady loves him, and therefore does she so easily part from you. Now, if you will but follow my counsel, this journey to the convent of St. Michael shall never be."

"Speak it," said Adela; "for I am so unhappy,

I would adopt any counsel. Like a drowning wretch, I would catch at straws and rushes to save me."

"Lady, you can write," replied Grace, eagerly: "catch at nothing but a grey goosequill; indite me here a letter to Sir Henry; tell him how you are to be spirited away; tell him the day and hour that you are to journey towards St. Michael's Mount. Do this, and trust to him to deliver you from such a cruel enforcement of your will to become a nun."

"And if I do write, I have no means to convey the letter. We are forbidden to pass the castle gates; we are both watched; and you are suspected on my account. I have not a creature I could trust in such a delicate matter, save yourself, and you cannot help me. And more than all, I know not where Sir Henry may be found at this time; it is long since I have seen him."

"But I know where he is to be found," replied Grace; "and that there is no time to be lost. Cædmon, the Saxon page, came here

to-day, with a letter from my Lord Abbot to the Lady Alicia ; I saw him for a moment crossing the hall ; I always pick out the news from the pages, and from him I learnt that Sir Henry de Pomeroy had this day arrived at the abbey to confer with my Lord Abbot, and that he is to leave it to-night, for some distant part of the county. Cædmon departed, or I would have learnt more ; for he is a good youth, and I am sure might be trusted, for the sake of a fair lady's thanks and a kind word. I am sure he might be trusted to deliver a letter, in secret, to Sir Henry de Pomeroy."

"I think he might," said Adela ; "but how to get it conveyed to Cædmon, who, you say, is gone back to the abbey ?"

"Oh ! leave that to me," said Grace ; "I can wile our Patch to do a wise man's errand as well as any fool in the West ; he would do anything for me for a fair word, or a smile, or, may be, a kiss. I don't say I ever let him take such

freedoms, but I would promise to let him have one if he took safe the letter."

"And I would give him gold to do it," said the Lady Adela.

"Gold! my lady," exclaimed Grace; "do you think Patch would want such to make him do your ladyship's bidding when I had said he should have what he would think so much better a reward? But it was only for your sake I thought of it. I want no bachelors to be familiar with me," added Grace, in a tone which seemed to indicate she thought her offer of service for her lady's sake had been somewhat underrated, in the high price her vanity prompted her to set on the promised reward.

"The Lady Adela could not suppress a smile in the midst of her distress, and said,—“Well, my girl, and if Patch steals a kiss from you, as a reward for serving me in this strait, you shall be no loser; for I will give you a dozen, Grace, myself, to requite the one stolen, as my

best thanks for your suggestion. Anything is better than being forced into a convent. I will write to Sir Henry de Pomeroy, and will tell him how I am situated; and you shall lose no time in instructing Patch what to do with my letter."

It was soon written, sealed, tied with a silken string, and deposited in the fair and faithful bosom of Grace Bolt, and away she went to seek the fool as her messenger.

On her way, at the landing of the great staircase, she met Nurse Cicely.

"Good-morrow, my pretty maiden. Whither away so fast?" said the nurse. "You look heated," and she gave her an obliging waft of a breeze from her constant hand-friend the great peacock-feathered fan.

"Only to do an errand for my young lady," said Grace.

"An errand for thy young lady! and what may that be?" said the nurse.

“ Nothing of any consequence,” replied Grace.

“ Then the more easily told, my bower-maiden,” said Cicely.

“ Well, but suppose I don’t choose to tell?” said Grace pertly, who was irritated into making a hasty speech by this interruption.

“ Oh ! marry, do we get pert to our betters?” said the nurse, reddening, and fanning herself with a length of fan, like the first wind of a rising tempest. “ There are those in the castle who can make you tell, mistress, did I choose to set them about your ears. But I will know ; for did not I tell you, when I engaged you to wait upon my young lady, that I was to know all her secrets, that you chanced to know ?”

“ But I did not say this was a secret,” said Grace ; “ do let me pass, for I am in haste.”

“ Pass over my head, then, as you seem well disposed to do,” said the nurse, planting herself in such a manner in the very middle of the landing at the top of the stairs, that, stout as

she was, Grace could not slip by her. "Now nurse, good nurse," she said ; "do let me pass."

"Oh, yes, forsooth, we are good nurse now that we want to slip away from being found out ; but old nurse at another time, when there is nothing to be got but thank you, for good manners. But I tell you, slut, that you shall not pass till I know the business you are going upon. Don't I and all the castle know that it is my Lady Alicia de Beaumont's pleasure that an eye should be kept over you and your young lady, who does not know her duty, to see you go no wrong ways."

"Well then," said Grace, "I am only going to seek Patch, the fool."

"Seek Patch, the fool !" exclaimed Cicely ; "fool enough, indeed, if he gives his mind or his company to such as you."

"But in order that he may give his mind, and his company also, to something much better, I would now seek him, to tell him that my young lady would fain give him some instructions

that may be useful to him before she leaves Wilsworthy. And as my lady and I are going where we shall not want such things, now I think of it, I will ask my lady, before we leave, to give you the furred court-pie, that you said you should like to have when she left it off; and as to Patch, I'll tell him that my young lady will never give him a cross or a tester more, nor send him one, if he does not pay as much attention to you, and go with you to mass, and serve you at your trencher, when we are gone, as if you were herself."

"There's some sense in that, if you speak sooth," said Cicely.

"And why should I not?" said Grace; "what good can it do me when I am gone, if Patch care for you or not, Nurse Cicely, that I should trouble myself about the matter, but to please my lady, who respects you? and as to the court-pie, I will not say a word about it to my lady, if you would wish me not."

"By all means speak about it," said the

nurse ; “I could take out the furs and line my kirtle with them against winter.”

“Well then,” replied Grace; “it shall be yours, and so let me pass on.” And on she went, rejoicing to think how she had escaped the Argus eyes of Nurse Cicely at the cost of as little story-telling as bower-maiden could hope to expend to clear herself from such a strait. And now came the part to be played with Patch, and here Grace displayed all her tact and skill.

First of all, when she saw him standing and playing with one of his favourite hawks that he had taken down from its perch in the great hall, she at once determined to change her previously arranged mode of attack, and, as she had not now to *seek* him, she would seem to be where she was by chance, that he might seek her. So she made as if she would pass on ; but in order that his ears might convey to him a sense of her presence (for his back being towards her, his eyes could not), she sang a verse or two of one of the most popular ballads of Robin Hood.

Patch, who was musical, took her up at the counterpoint, and chimed in with the tune.

“A dainty ballad that, Master Patch,” said Grace, as she ended the verse.

“And one that lures the very hawks from their perches when you sing it, my pretty one,” said the fool tenderly, as he stooped down and extended his hand to his favourite, who had flown from the perch to the ground.

“I wish that hawk were a carrier-bird, such as our crusaders use, to send any news by, to the Christian prisoners in a Saracen fortress, as we are told they do sometimes, in the ballads of the minstrels.”

“And wherefore do you wish this, my pretty one?” inquired Patch.

“Because,—because,” answered Grace, coquettishly, and giving him a smile that made her look very pretty indeed, “because, — I won’t tell you.”

“Yes, you will,—you must tell me, Grace; me, who would be to you as your carrier-bird,

or as the very dove of your bosom, would you but let me, Grace ; you do not know how tender I am and can be,—do try me ?”

“ Well, I do not know but I may,” she replied, “ would you then put wings to your feet, instead of your back, and fly like a swallow for swiftness, and bear a letter for me to Cædmon, the Saxon page, and do so in secret. Patch, can you keep a secret ?”

“ Ay, that I can, when it comes from a pretty wench, like thyself, provided it is sealed ;” and the fool looked at Grace Bolt’s lips as he spoke, as if they had been made of red wax, and fitted for melting at the warmth of that flame he was in the very mood to light up in his own heart for her. He gave, also, certain other indications of preparing to take that reward she had already intimated to her mistress, she might feel disposed to reserve as a payment for his services ; for he wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and looked at her again as lovingly as if she were one of his young and favourite hawks.

But Grace knew well that to pay beforehand is not always wise ; and so she drew up her head, and said rather sharply, “ Stand back, Master Patch ; you don’t play the fool with me : I shall not seal, as you call it, till the letter brings an answer of receipt. No kissing for services to come.”

“ Then I will do none,” said Patch pettishly.

“ At your pleasure,” replied Grace. “ Osgood, the forester, will do my errand as well for me, and ask no present guerdon ; though, may be, I may give him leave to take one, because he is too modest to ask it. I shall go to him.”

“ That’s what you shall not,” said Patch, his jealousy of the forester’s gaining any claims for service done to Grace Bolt overcoming all his scruples. “ Give me your letter, and I will bear it for you, though it were to the devil’s house ?”

“ For shame,” said Grace ; “ it is only to the monastery, where they know how to keep him out so well. But, Patch, if you do my errand,

you must remember you do it for one greater than I, even for my young lady. And there must be no blundering of your thick head."

"I would cut it off to prevent mistakes, rather than make a dull use of it in your service, my sweetest of millers' daughters," said the fool; "only instruct me, and I will obey you."

"Well, then," said Grace, "seek Cædmon, the Saxon page, and tell him, as he loves the saints in Heaven, or would win the thanks and prayers of a fair and distressed lady on earth,—the Lady Adela,—that he give that letter, in secret, to Sir Henry de Pomeroy. Now mind, in secret,—and don't talk of your errand to any one."

"I will do all you direct," said Patch, "and do it quickly."

"And be sure and call at the mill," continued Grace, "and give my duty to father, and tell him that I am going away somewhere with my young lady, but I am told not to mention it to anybody; so I only tell it to you, that you

may tell it to him : it is to Mount St. Michael's, among the nuns in that gloomy place. And be sure and ask father, how the new ass carries the sacks of corn, and if he is as good at a load as the old one. And ask how Orgar does, and the little dog, too ; and give my love to them all."

Patch promised the fair Molinaria to obey all these her several behests, and set off accordingly to fulfil them.

CHAPTER XII.

Bloated with ambition, pride and avarice,
You swell to counsel kings and govern kingdoms.
Content you with monopolizing Heav'n,
And let this little hanging ball alone ;
For give you but a foot of conscience there,
And you, like Archimedes, toss the globe.

DRYDEN.

ABBOT BALDWIN was by no means one of those churchmen who, having obtained the rule over an opulent house, are satisfied with what they possess, and availing themselves of its revenues to meet their own lavish expenditure, are content to let the rest go in its regular channel for the support of the monastery and the poor.

Little as Baldwin cared for money in itself,

he knew well enough it was the very life-blood of his ambitious views ; and that without its aid he could not hope to set in motion any of those mercenary partisans with whom he was leagued to carry forward all his plans. The acquisition of wealth was to him, therefore, as an instrument of aggrandisement, one by which he could raise his own fortunes to higher honours, and a larger scope for the exercise of that power he had hitherto enjoyed. With a view to the furtherance of this object, he had originally urged on the marriage between his friend and ally, Sir Henry de Pomeroy, and the fair Adela. But he had not then believed it to be within the verge of possibility, that an opportunity would occur, (by the concurrence of the Lady Alicia, and the instrumentality of his own sister, the abbess of St. Michael's,) to enable him, by having the unfortunate young creature within his power, to convert to his own, and the church's use, the whole of her immense possessions. This probable advantage he had seen at a glance, when

the Lady Alicia made to him her confession ; hence was it he had at once espoused all her views, to break the projected match between Adela and his friend, and to place her in a convent for life within the Mount.

But whilst thus actively employed in a scheme so subtle and so selfish in its ends, Baldwin did not forget that it was absolutely necessary Sir Henry de Pomeroy should be kept in total ignorance of the part he took in all these dark designs. For Sir Henry was a person of too much importance to be lost to the cause of the Earl of Mortaigne (by whose favour Baldwin hoped to rise to the very summit of his ambition, were but the prince once seated on the throne,) by any offence that might be given to him on the part of the abbot or his friends. All that was to be done, therefore, in the removal of the Lady Adela, must so be carried forward as to seem the sole unassisted work of the Lady Alicia ; and, in order the better to secure her measures from all interruption, the wily abbot

had undertaken to send Sir Henry, on some matter connected with their plots, to the castle of one of the rebel barons, in the north of the county, till she should be removed.

But there are moments when the human will, even in the least capricious, cannot be held within its customary line of action ; so was it now with Sir Henry. For the first time, since these intrigues were set on foot by Prince John, he did not obey the advice or instructions of the abbot ; so that, instead of going direct to the north of Devon, he came to the abbey, there to complain to his supposed friend of the rigour with which he had been treated by the Lady Alicia, who had refused him all admission at the castle, since she had been openly acquainted with his pretensions to her ward.

Another cause, likewise, induced Sir Henry to seek Baldwin : he had lately felt, he could scarcely tell wherefore, a lurking and undefined suspicion of the abbot's sincerity towards him ; so true is it that real confidence never does

exist between crafty men. With the abbot, even in his most sincere days, we doubt if Sir Henry, could he have been put to a similar test, would have played the part of Alexander and his physician.

Yet nothing particular had occurred to shake his confidence in Baldwin. The truth was that, almost unknown to himself, the hints which had been thrown out by the palmer concerning the abbot, had slowly but surely made an impression on Sir Henry's mind; they had caused him to reflect seriously respecting the past. The abbot's intrigues for the Earl of Mortaigne, with all their treachery, came before him in a new light; and Baldwin did not rise in his estimation by this calm but severe retrospection. Sir Henry knew, also, that the abbot was a disappointed man, that his hatred to Richard arose from his having failed in his views of gaining the primacy of England. *That* for years had been the aim of his ambition; for that had he plotted, served, toiled, betrayed; and, like many an

ambitious character, he knew well that Baldwin had converted his hopes into expectations, and had mistaken his own views for himself, for such as other men in power ought to have entertained for him. Hence was it that the bitterness of Baldwin's former disappointments arose more from the deceptions of his own pride and self-opinion than from any other cause.

Richard had given him much ; but from the hour the primacy was denied to his hopes, the abbot, as is usual with ungrateful persons, cancelled the memory of all past obligations, and had set the king down as ungrateful to him ; cherishing in his own bosom the feelings of an injured churchman, because he was a dissatisfied friend. This dissatisfaction showed itself in everything ; hence had originated those bitter quarrels with the bishop of the diocese, and those (Baldwin's) appeals to Rome, of which we had occasion to speak formerly : quarrels still unsettled, still rankling and irritating, that served, with the growing spirit of rebellion, to add to

the sufferings and the difficulties of many in the West, who in their secret souls longed indeed for peace. Painful as the retrospection was of all these matters, they were rendered yet more galling, when Sir Henry recollected that there was something strange in the abbot's not having said a word about the Lady Adela for some days past; nor had Baldwin named her in the letter in which he had proposed to him the journey to the north. These recollections now so far acted on the young Lord de Pomeroy, that he was by no means in the most friendly or satisfied mood when he once more met Baldwin at his own abbey. There was, therefore, something of distance and reserve in the manner of Sir Henry as he saluted the superior with a cold and formal good morrow.

This cold manner struck the abbot; it embarrassed him, conscious as he was of the double part he had been playing with his friend; and this very consciousness occasioned his own manner to become as distant and reserved as Sir

Henry's. They were to dine in private ; on former occasions, a meal always favourable to the most social intercourse ; but now they sat down to their private repast in the abbot's chamber with the most awkward feelings ; for each felt as if he had a quarrel with the other, and this feeling soon induced a querulous temper in both. At length they differed on some trifling matter, and when persons do so, whilst under the influence of the quarrelling mood, it seldom fails to end in a real, open, and serious breach. Even so was it now. For not only did they disagree concerning certain steps to be taken in the affairs of the Earl of Mortaigne, but on Sir Henry's entering upon the circumstances of his severe repulse from the Lady Alicia, and the abbot giving no advice, no counsel about any perseverance in his suit, and no offers of service with the guardian of his beloved, (though Baldwin had originally proposed to him the lady,) the fiery young man lost his temper, and in no very measured terms fell upon the abbot with the

bitterest reproaches, the effects of spleen, more than of any settled purpose of displeasure.

Proud, haughty, unused to reproof, and ill brooking it from one he deemed his inferior in talents, as in age, Baldwin felt his blood rise; it glowed in his cheeks, it darkened his brow, it trembled in his whole disturbed frame. He felt he was on the point of bursting upon the petulant boy (for so he deemed Sir Henry at this moment) with such a passionate reply as would, in all probability, for ever cause a breach between them; a breach which might, perhaps, be fatal to the interests of the Earl of Mortaigne.

Under so strong a temptation to give way to his fury, the abbot had but one way left to preserve his self-command, and that he adopted ere it was too late. On some slight pretext of recollecting he had a matter of business about the abbey that he had forgotten to arrange with the claustral prior before he sat down to dinner, he had resolution enough to make a hasty retreat, to endeavour, by absenting

himself for a short time from the object of his wrath, to overcome its violence. But such an effort at self-command, such a repression of his own feelings, was gall and bitterness to the proud spirit of Abbot Baldwin, who had never curbed his own will to pleasure mortal creature. He was, therefore, not only angry with Sir Henry, but with himself, for thus seemingly to yield to him.

In this temper of mind, as ill fortune would have it, the first person he met on leaving the dining chamber, was Cædmon, the page. The dark spot on the abbot's brow was too evident to escape the notice of the youth, who *looked his thoughts*, as he stopped short and bowed in silence to his superior. Had the page been wise, he should not have looked at Baldwin in a way as if he were struck with the disturbance of his countenance; he should have passed on, without seeming to heed it. As it was, the keen glance of the Saxon's eye (trifling though such a circumstance may be,) was sufficient to

give a new cause of offence to a proud and irritated mind, which, like an animal of prey, when once roused into fury, will fall on any one who may chance to cross its path, though the object which had originally called up its rage has escaped him.

Even so was it now: the mind of Baldwin (ill governed in all matters where its own schemes were not immediately and vitally concerned) felt some kind of relief in having an object thrown in its way on which it could with impunity vent the overflowing bitterness of its own feelings: and, on seeing Cædmon advance to the door of the gallery that led to the chamber wherein he had left Sir Henry, the abbot asked him in a rough, rude, and sudden manner,—“What might be Cædmon’s business, that he was about, without asking permission, to seek his guest, Sir Henry de Pomeroy, in his (the abbot’s) private chamber?”

“My Lord Abbot,” answered Cædmon, “I have a letter to deliver into Sir Henry’s own hands.”

“A letter! from whom?”

“I am not at liberty to say, my lord,” replied Cædmon, mildly but firmly.

“Not at liberty to say!” re-echoed the abbot:

“Ha! that’s strange. But you are my page, and I command you, on your obedience to me, to give up the letter to my hands. I will deliver it.”

“I dare not do so,” replied Cædmon.

“Dare not!” exclaimed the abbot, again, in the very surprise of the circumstance, repeating the page’s words. “How dare not?”

“Because,” replied Cædmon, “my own honour would not suffer me to do so. I have promised to deliver it into no hand but that of Sir Henry.”

“Then I will save thy nice honour, insolent boy,” said the abbot; and he attempted to thrust his hand into the breast of Cædmon’s tunic, for he evidently saw it was there that he carried the letter by his placing his hand upon it.

The boy struggled. "No, my Lord Abbot, no," he said vehemently, "this must not be; I would rather die on the spot, than betray a trust. My duty to you, my lord, is much, but to preserve my honour is to myself more. I will not yield the letter up to you."

"This from a base-born slave!" cried the abbot, passionately; "one of your vile race pretend to talk of your honour in slavery!"

"The Norman abbot has forgot what belongs to his own honour, in the greatness of his power," said Cædmon; "but the Saxon boy will remember what is due to his, even in the misery of the most abject dependance. Proud abbot! I am neither base-born, nor a slave; but the son of a brave Saxon thane, nobler born than thyself."

Irritated to the quick by this disrespectful and indignant speech, from the lips of a poor Saxon youth, who was his own (and, in other moods) his favoured page, Baldwin (who had good cause

for a reasonable anger) unhappily so far forgot his manhood, and the respect due to himself as a churchman, that, in the vehemence of his passion, he struck Cædmon a blow ! The youth recoiled some steps on receiving it ; but not from its violence. He recoiled from the shock sustained by the injury done to his inward, not his outward, feelings by such an indignity. The blow struck most on the spirit, not on the body of the Saxon.

His whole countenance became in an instant changed ; all that there was of the gentleness, the sweetness that usually characterized it, fled ; and though the features remained the same, it seemed as if one of those enraged spirits that were the theme of Saxon story had suddenly animated them with the very instinct of evil. His cheek was blanched, his lips closed, his teeth set together ; he drew hard his breath, though not a word escaped him,—such deep passions had no utterance ; and there was a

sternness in his vulture eye, as he placed his hand to his side, as if to draw his poniard, for a purpose that should give a blow that would requite on the spot the indelible dishonour of that he had received.

Fortunately, however, he had left his poniard where it chanced to be lying, on the table of the scriptorium, at the moment Patch had committed the letter, he was about to deliver, to his trust with all due caution. This circumstance, in all probability, saved the life of the Lord Abbot ; but it could not his own. Cædmon knew it. He knew well, the instant he could but think of what had passed, that his passionate words, his still more passionate action, towards the superior of an abbey that had the privilege of pit and gallows, and in such arbitrary times, must be fatal to him. He knew he should be sentenced to die by a means the most degrading : the thought was not to be endured. Deprived of the instrument of an immediate re-

sentment, stung to the very soul, by a sense of his disgrace, and almost maddened with the vehemence of his insulted feelings, he exclaimed, as the abbot endeavoured to detain him,

“Let me go, my Lord Abbot, let me go;—you have struck me,—you have dishonoured me for ever! My fathers never brooked a blow! You have ruined the Saxon boy who loved you; whose heart beat warmly in gratitude to you. But you have lowered him in his own eyes, in his own esteem. You have left him nothing to hope for but in death.”

So saying, with a wildness in his looks amounting almost to frenzy, he rushed past Baldwin, and before any interruption could be given to his purpose, quitted the abbey, and, like the hunted hart that carries in his side the arrow that has stricken but not slain him, Cædmon fled with a swift step and a tortured mind, to seek Wulfred, the old Saxon crusader, the faithful follower of his grandsire Oswy, and the last re-

maining friend to whom he could unburthen his heart, or who was capable of estimating the extent of his injuries, and the strength of his indignant emotions.

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